

**A CULTURE OF COUPS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE UNDERLYING FACTORS
THAT PERPETUATE THE CYCLE OF MILITARY COUPS IN BURKINA FASO**

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A
Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University and The University of Malta in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Science
Conflict Analysis and Resolution
And
Master of Arts
Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security

Fall Semester 2023

George Mason University

Fairfax, VA, USA

University of Malta

Valletta, Malta



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DEDICATION

To my parents Dunja and Scott who supported me through my academic journey and to my
closest friends who always cheered me on

ABSTRACT

A CULTURE OF COUPS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE UNDERLYING FACTORS THAT PERPETUATE THE CYCLE OF MILITARY COUPS IN BURKINA FASO

This thesis examines how Burkina Faso has been able to continue a cycle of military coups d'état with such a high success rate. The purpose of this research is to contribute to existing theories regarding military coups, coup-proofing, coup risk, and institutional weakness as the key findings bring insight into the variables that contribute to these phenomena. Burkina Faso gained independence from the French at the same time most African nations became independent and while most of these nations also fell victim to coup attempts and successes, Burkina Faso continued to fall victim, even after many nations had progressed past the "African coup d'état crisis." Extensive historical research is performed in this thesis to gather a significant understanding of how the colonial rule in Burkina Faso created variables that then affected coup success. The historical analysis also allows the reader to see a pattern of state instability that predates every coup d'état in Burkina Faso, but the instability itself does not explain the coup's success. Instead, state instability must be coupled with institutional weakness, lack of coup-proofing, and poor civil-military relations in order to see success.

In this thesis, I determine four variables that contribute to this cycle of coup success in Burkina Faso using the method of historical process tracing. This thesis determines that the lack

of state institutions, a problem rooted in the colonial origins of the state, has plagued the stability of Burkina Faso since independence. This has resulted in a lack of coup-proofing and positive civil-military relations which contributes to the continued cycle of military coup success, further destabilizing the country. Furthermore, the research determines that Burkina Faso operates as a modern praetorian state, an argument supported by the socio-political dynamics of the country.

ACRONYM LIST

AOF - Afrique Occidentale Française

CRs - Revolutionary Committees

CDRs - Committees for the Defense of the Revolution

CNR - National Council of the Revolution (*Conseil National de la Révolution*)

CMRPN - Military Committee of Recovery for National Progress (*Comite Militaire de Redressment pout le Progress National*)

CSP - The Council of Popular Salvation (*Conseil de Salut du Peuple*)

ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States

ISGS - Islamic State in the Greater Sahara

JNIM - Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen

NTC - National Transitional Council

MPSR - Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration (*Mouvement patriotique pour la sauvegarde et la restauration*)

ODP/MT - The Organization for People's Democracy-Labor Movement (*Organisation pour la Democratie Populaire – Mouvement du Travail*)

PPD - Programme Populaire de Développement

RSP - Regiment of Presidential Security (*Regiment de Sécurité Présidentielle*)

T.M.I.S. - Total Military Intervention Score

UDV-RDA - Voltaic Democratic Union – African Democratic Rally (*Union Démocratique Voltaïque–Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*)

UNDD - The National Union for the Defence of Democracy (*Union Nationale pour la Defense de la Democratie*)

TPRs - People's Revolutionary Tribunals

VOA - Voices of America

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CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since independence in 1960, Burkina Faso has been riddled with instability, along with much of the West Africa region.¹ Following the 2014 uprisings which overthrew long-time ruler Blaise Compaoré and a failed coup d'état in 2015, there was hope that Burkina Faso would begin the process of democratization.² However, seven years later the nation would face two successful military coups d'état in one year.³ With ten coups d'état since independence, nine of which have been successful, Burkina Faso continues a path of instability.⁴

1.1 AFRICA AND THE COUP D'ETAT

While coup d'états have plagued nearly every continent since the beginning of state formation, Africa became the hub for military coups following decolonization.⁵ A coup d'état, or coup, is defined by Powell and Thyne as “an illegal and avert attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive.”⁶ A successful coup is then

¹ Rebekah Painter. 2022. “Burkina Faso.” *Our World: Burkina Faso*. Great Neck Publishing. doi:10.3331/our_world_481_250088.

² Abdoulie Sawo. “The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015.” *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18.

³ “Burkina Faso: Second Coup of 2022 - House of Commons Library,” House of Commons Library, 2022, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9633/>.

⁴ Powell, Jonathan & Clayton Thyne. 2011. [Global Instances of Coups from 1950-Present](#). *Journal of Peace Research* 48(2):249-259.

⁵ Pat McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson. “Sixty Coups in Thirty Years – Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D'État.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1986): 539–46. doi:10.1017/S0022278X00007175.

⁶ Jonathan M Powell and Clayton L Thyne. “Global Instances of Coups from 1950 to 2010: A New Dataset.” *Journal of peace research* 48, no. 2 (2011): 249–259.

defined as one in which perpetrators seize and hold power for at least 7 days.⁷ Furthermore, coups can be further defined based on the perpetrators and the environment in which a coup is performed. While elite-officer coups are most common in Africa, those committed by the military's leadership, combat-officer coups also take place.⁸ This paper will follow the Powell and Thyne (2011) definition of coup d'état as it was developed from a variety of varying definitions of coup d'état in order to create a universal definition. Furthermore, when discussing coups d'état in Burkina Faso, the term "military coup" will be employed often as it is more suitable to the nature of coups d'état in Burkina Faso.

With such a high success rate and history of military coups, minimal research has been performed regarding the coup phenomenon in Burkina Faso. While many researchers have looked at Africa as a case study, or in some cases, West Africa, Burkina Faso stands as a great case study to understand *why* coups are so successful there and what that means for other West African, or all African states. Theoretically, this paper looks to contribute to the literature regarding coup theory and coup-proofing theory. This thesis examines underlying factors and historical contexts that have contributed to the remarkably high success rate of military coups in Burkina Faso.

1.2 THESIS FINDINGS

Through extensive historical process tracing and the use of a single case study, this thesis finds that the lack of state institutions, a problem rooted in the colonial origins of the state, has plagued the stability of Burkina Faso since independence. This has resulted in a lack of coup-proofing and positive civil-military relations which contributes to the continued cycle of

⁷ Powell and Thyne, Global Instances of Coups from 1950 to 2010: A New Dataset." 249-259.

⁸ Holger Albrecht and Ferdinand Eibl. "How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups." International studies quarterly (2018).

military coup success, further destabilizing the country. Furthermore, the research determines that Burkina Faso operates as a modern praetorian state, an argument supported by the socio-political dynamics of the country. The conclusions made are further confirmed by analysis of various theories which pertain to coup-proofing and civil-military relations.

1.3 SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FOR “REMARKABLY HIGH” STATEMENT

The use of the phrase “remarkably high” in academia requires significant data to support such a statement. The following section provides the evidence to support the statement through various data sets and comparisons to other states. The success rate is calculated as;

$$\frac{\text{Successful Coup (s)}}{\text{Total Coup Attempts [successful coup(s) + unsuccessful coup (s)]}} = \text{Coup Success Rate Percentage.}^9$$

10

It is important to note that the coup success rate calculation does not include report coup plots. Data regarding coup plots varies widely as governments can report false plots to justify a state’s action or information regarding a reported plot is limited. While further research regarding coup-proofing should include reported coup plots to understand the impact that coup-proofing strategies may have on a state, in this paper, understanding a country’s general success rate of coups will include only attempted coups.

Powell and Thyne (2011) published “Global Instances of Coups from 1950 to 2010: A New Dataset” where the authors cataloged coups following the decolonization wave at the end of World War II. Their data is used by Voices of America (VOA) in their *Coups in Africa* Project.¹¹

⁹ *Total Coup Attempts* is calculated by the total number of successful coup attempts in a country *and* the total number of unsuccessful coup attempts.

¹⁰ The success rate percentage is rounded to the nearest 10th so if a rate comes out to .8767 the percentage will be listed as 87.7%, if a rate comes out as .5653 the percentage will be listed as 56.5%.

¹¹ Brian Williamson and Megan Duzor, “By the Numbers: Coups in Africa,” *By The Numbers: Coups in Africa - VOA Special Report*, 2022, <https://projects.voanews.com/african-coups/>.

As of February 2, 2022, VOA's rankings for the top five coups per country are as follows; Sudan (17), Burundi (11), Ghana (10), Sierra Leone (10), Burkina Faso (9).¹² Based on this data, Burkina Faso's success rate of 88.9% is over 30% higher than any of the states that rank above Burkina Faso in the total number of coups.^{13 14}

The VOA *Coups in Africa* project does not account for recent updates to Powell and Thyne's raw data set as of August 2023. In the most recent data, one more successful coup was performed in Burkina Faso bringing the country's success rate to 90%.^{15 16}

Pat McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson (1986) catalog coups in Sub-Saharan Africa¹⁷ from January 1956 to December 1985 using a Total Military Intervention Score (T.M.I.S.).¹⁸ T.M.I.S. is important to understand as other scholars use this system to analyze coup activity and will be expanded on in future sections. T.M.I.S. is calculated as follows;

$$(\# \text{ of Successful Coups} \times 5) + (\# \text{ of Failed Coups} \times 3) + (\# \text{ of Coup Plots} \times 1) = T.M.I.S.$$

During that time period, Burkina Faso ranked 6th of the 45 states calculated with a T.M.I.S. of 32.¹⁹ While Ghana ranked number one, with a T.M.I.S. of 56, Ghana's success rate was 45.5%, compared to Burkina Faso's success rate of 83.3%.²⁰ Nigeria was the only other

¹² Williamson and Duzor, "By the Numbers: Coups in Africa".

¹³ Success Rates: Burkina Faso (88.9%) , Ghana and Sierra Leone (50%), Burundi (45.5%), & Sudan (35.3%)

¹⁴ It should be noted that there are some African states which hold a 100% success rate for coups, but these states have low total coup attempts with Egypt holding the highest at 4/4 total coups being successful. Rwanda follows with 2/2 for successful coups and a few states hold a 1/1. While a successful coup is significant in itself, this paper aims to look at how Burkina Faso's success rate can be seen as uniquely significant due to the total number of coups attempted in the state.

¹⁵ Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne. 2011. [Global Instances of Coups from 1950-Present](#). *Journal of Peace Research* 48(2): 249-259.

¹⁶ Burkina Faso faced a second coup in 2022 on September 30th, bringing their total coup attempts to ten, nine of which are successful.

¹⁷ The authors do not include some North African states which means Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya are not included in this data set.

¹⁸ Pat McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson. "Sixty Coups in Thirty Years – Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D'État." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1986): 539–46. doi:10.1017/S0022278X00007175.

¹⁹ McGowan and Johnson, "Sixty Coups in Thirty Years – Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D'État," 539-46.

²⁰ Ibid.

country during this time to share the same T.M.I.S. rating of 32 and success rate of 83.3%. The second highest success rate was Mauritania at 75%.²¹

Patrick McGowan (2003) later expands on the above data to include military interventions from January 1956 to December 2001. McGowan continues to use T.M.I.S. to rank 48 Sub-Saharan African states with Burkina Faso ranking 8th.²² Burkina Faso has the 2nd highest success rate of all 48 Sub-Saharan African states at 85.7%²³, following Swaziland (now Eswatini) with a 100% success rate from its only coup attempt in 1983,²⁴ compared to Burkina Faso's seven total attempts during this time period.²⁵ Nigeria held the second-highest success rate at 75% followed by Benin at 66.7%.²⁶

The Statistica Research Department published worldwide coup data from 1945 to 2021 where Burkina Faso ranks 10th amongst nations globally for coup d'états.²⁷ Statistica data translates to an 83.3% success rate for coups d'état in Burkina Faso, followed again by Nigeria with a 75% success rate and Peru at 71.4%.²⁸ This data set is important to the understanding of the remarkability of Burkina Faso's military coup success rate as even on a global scale, Burkina Faso ranks highest.

While Burkina Faso continues to have one of the highest success rates for military coups for years, it is also important to note the trend of other West African states also having high coup

²¹ Ibid.

²² Patrick J. McGowan. "African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 3 (2003): 339–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876235>.

²³ McGowan, African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution," 339-70.

²⁴ Jonathan Powell and Clayton Thyne. 2011. [Global Instances of Coups from 1950-Present](#). *Journal of Peace Research* 48(2): 249-259.

²⁵ Patrick J. McGowan. "African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 3 (2003): 339–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876235>.

²⁶ McGowan, African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution," 339-70.

²⁷ Einar H Dyvik, "Coup d'états Worldwide by Type and Country 2021," Statista, November 28, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1350920/coup-d-etats-world-type/>.

²⁸ Dyvik, "Coup d'états Worldwide by Type and Country 2021."

success rates, such as Nigeria. This trend should be explored further as many of these states continue to rank high in T.M.I.S. and overall success rate.

1.4 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis contains seven chapters, beginning with the introduction in chapter one which details the thesis's purpose and goals for contribution to existing theory. Chapter one also includes data that supports the statement "remarkably high success rate" made regarding coups in Burkina Faso. Chapter two consists of a literature review that will detail different theories on coup risk, coup-proofing, civil-military relations, colonial impact, and institution building. These theories will be expanded on further in the thesis to support the arguments made. Chapter three explains the methodology used for this research. This chapter will also explain the reasoning behind the case selection and the use of a single case study. Chapter four is an overview of the case study Burkina Faso. Due to the use of historical process tracing in this thesis, chapter five will also contain significant historical details of the case study. Chapter five, data and findings, will go into further detail regarding historical implications and expand on coup-proofing and civil-military relations discussed in the literature review. Chapter six is the final discussion regarding all the data collected for this thesis, this is where the main thesis arguments will be explained and supported. Chapter seven is the concluding chapter which will wrap up the entirety of the thesis and provide details for further research.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, I investigate some of the literature surrounding coups d'état, coup proofing, and civil-military relations as well as their support and limitations in this case study. Burkina Faso presents some challenges to the literature review as much of the literature regarding coup theory focuses on Africa or West Africa as a whole. Being a relatively small country, historical accounts appear more limited. With that being said, there is still a large amount of literature surrounding Burkina Faso and the region that applies to this research. Vital to the understanding of coup d'état literature is the overarching etiology of internal war pioneered by Harry Eckstein which is explored in the next section.

2.2 INTERNAL WAR

Internal war is defined by Eckstein (1965), as “any resort to violence within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies.”²⁹ Internal war is a genus of other species like civil war, revolt, rebellion, coup d'état, etc.³⁰ All these so-called species are grouped in the genus of internal war because they all involve the use of violence to attain a purpose that could be attained without violence.³¹ Eckstein adds significant support to the need for research into causal

²⁹ Harry Eckstein, “On the Etiology of Internal Wars,” *History and Theory* 4, no. 2 (1965): 133–63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504149>, 131.

³⁰ Eckstein, “On the Etiology of Internal Wars,” 133.

³¹ Ibid.

mechanisms that contribute to internal war as he sees them assisting in avoiding the “unqualified conspiracy theory of internal war.”³²

Even in the case of a coup d’etat where conspiracy does play a role in the act itself, there is much more to be understood beyond the conspirators.³³ Recognizing the distinction between “preconditions” and “precipitants” of internal wars is necessary for the understanding of these causal mechanisms. A precipitant of internal war is the event that starts the war, in this case, the coup d’etat.³⁴ Preconditions of internal war “are the circumstances which make it possible for the precipitant to bring political violence.”³⁵ Internal war is not possible without the precipient event in which it begins, nor is it possible if the circumstances of society that make it possible for the precipitant to create an internal war do not exist.³⁶ Preconditions can be seen as intellectual, economic, social, and political factors that all contribute to the possibility of internal war.³⁷

Eckstein also adds an important argument for the understanding of why coup-proofing theory will also be examined in this paper which is that “in the real world of phenomena, events occur not only because forces leading towards them are strong, but also because forces tending to inhibit, or obstruct, them are weak or absent.”³⁸ Internal war can fail to happen merely or mostly because of certain forces that hinder its occurrence.³⁹

2.2.1 ETIOLOGY OF INTERNAL WAR LIMITATIONS

While internal war types are similar in their use of violence, they also vary significantly. Further typology of the different internal wars is needed for an etiology of internal war which

³² Ibid, 141.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, 140

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 140.

³⁷ Ibid, 143-44.

³⁸ Ibid, 153.

³⁹ Ibid.

can determine the type of internal war most likely to occur based on certain circumstances.⁴⁰

Internal war preconditions and precipitants may be “unique or characteristic and continuous or spasmodic dynamic patterns” and coup d’etat can already be seen as a unique form of internal war.⁴¹ With that being said, one can still analyze the value of different forces which contribute to the internal war in society and determine which combination and ratio of factors contribute to a specific type.⁴² This paper aims in part to do so by examining a variety of coup and coup-proofing theories that can provide insight into the consistent success of military coups in Burkina Faso which can contribute to the overall etiology of internal war.

2.3 NEW WAR VS OLD WAR

Further important to the concept of an internal war and coup theory is the differentiation between the so-called “old wars” and “new wars.” This is additionally important to the historical context of Burkina Faso. Mary Kaldor (2012) argues that in the last decade of the twentieth century, a new type of organized violence has developed which she refers to as “new war”.⁴³ New wars are seen as “blurring the distinction between war, organized crime, and large-scale violations of human rights.”⁴⁴ These wars are different in character than old wars due to “their goals, methods of warfare, and how they are financed”.⁴⁵ Kaldor sees identity politics, decentralization of violence, and the new globalized war economy as factors that contribute to the characterization of new wars. The modern state of Burkina Faso has mostly existed in this

⁴⁰ Ibid, 162.

⁴¹ Ibid, 163.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mary Kaldor. *New & Old Wars : Organized Violence in a Global Era*. 3rd ed. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2012, 1.

⁴⁴ Kaldor, *New & Old Wars : Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 7.

“new war” era and these characteristics are important in the understanding of how the military, government, and society all developed during this time.

2.4 EARLY COUP D’ETAT THEORY IN AFRICA

Patrick McGowan and Thomas Johnson (1986) examine the coup phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa from 1956 to 1984 where they argue that a large aspect of the increase in military coups is due to the fact that many states had yet to transition from an agricultural society to an industrial one. The authors further note that from 1980-85, seven of the nine highest Total Military Intervention Scores (T.M.I.S.) were in West Africa, with Burkina Faso topping the list. They see “droughts, rapid population increase, stagnant economic growth or decline, and history of intervention making this region “par excellence” for a military coup.” McGowan and Johnson also discuss how the entire political process of newly independent African countries was in question as years of colonial rule had essentially stagnated their political evolution.⁴⁶ They conclude that during this time period, a military-led coup d’etat became the norm in which regimes were changed as military rule was as widespread as civilian rule.⁴⁷

2.5 CENTRAL PARADOX OF EUROPEAN STATE FORMATION CONNECTION TO AFRICAN STATE FORMATION

Charles Tilly (1992) contributes to the political process question for newly independent African countries in his analysis of European state formation. Tilly argues that the central paradox in European state formation was that pursuing war and military capacity also supported

⁴⁶Pat McGowan and Thomas H. Johnson. “Sixty Coups in Thirty Years – Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D’État.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 24, no. 3 (1986): 539–46. doi:10.1017/S0022278X00007175.

⁴⁷ McGowan and Johnson, “Sixty Coups in Thirty Years – Further Evidence Regarding African Military Coups D’État,” 539-46.

the creation of nation-states and governments with functioning institutions.⁴⁸ Essentially the military and government during this time gained legitimacy from civilians who assisted in supporting them, financially through taxes and politically through obedience to laws, in exchange for protection and eventually government services.⁴⁹ This is also reiterated by Kaldor (2012) who sees the distinction between military and domestic law enforcement happening at the same time.⁵⁰ This theory can be applied to African state formation because once European states were able to legitimize themselves and begin their colonization efforts in Africa, Africa was unable to progress on this potential timeline of state formation. In addition to this, the implementation of colonial institutions, which were eventually removed in the decolonization process, further limited the process of state formation due to the fact that once these states gained independence, a significant part of the world had already engaged in state capacity building and legitimization, forcing African states to quickly implement political processes without current knowledge of best practices for their cultures and communities. This is not to say that Africa had not previously engaged in best practices, as prior to colonization most cultures and communities had effective governance structures, but that colonialism had robbed these communities of continuing this path and instead dismantled previous systems and then left arbitrary borders with lack of institutions in a now institutionalized world.

This can be further connected to Sunday Abang's (2022) argument that the rise in military coups following decolonization is connected to the enlistment of Africans in the First and Second World Wars.⁵¹ Following enlistment, many Africans were given specialized military

⁴⁸ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States* (Malden/Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), chapter 3.

⁴⁹ Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States*, chapter 3.

⁵⁰ Kaldor, *New & Old Wars : Organized Violence in a Global Era*, 21.

⁵¹ Sunday Abang. "The Emerging Realities in Military Coups in Africa: An Explanation" *KIU Journal of Humanities* [Online], Volume 7 Number 2 (13 July 2022)

education and experience using advanced weaponry.⁵² This provided them with the necessary knowledge to execute coups d'état across the continent. Abang (2022), McGowan & Johnson (1986), and Tilly (1992) all point to a pattern of the ways in which colonialism contributed to the lack of institutions while strengthening military capacity.

2.6 WEST AFRICA AS A CENTER FOR COUP ACTIVITY

Patrick McGowan (2003) later expands on the 1956-1984 data set to include 1956-2001, where he still finds West Africa as the predominant center of coup activity. He further argues that military rulers govern no better than civilian elected governments in Africa and by definition are more corrupt and authoritarian. This statement is essential in the recent context of coups in Burkina Faso as perpetrators have justified their coups by accusing the government of being unable to handle the current jihadist insurgency.⁵³ McGowan further divides the data into pre and post-Cold War periods where he does not find a difference in coup activity based on macroeconomic conditions.⁵⁴ He does conclude that the probability of coups and attempts rises sharply for the first 45 months after independence and following every subsequent regime change.⁵⁵

2.7 COUP RISK

Aaron Belkin and Ethan Schofer (2003) give theoretical insights into factors that predispose regimes to vulnerability to coups based on three factors that underlie structural risk;

⁵² Abang, "The Emerging Realities in Military Coups in Africa: An Explanation."

⁵³ Understanding Burkina Faso's Latest Coup," Africa Center for Strategic Studies, September 7, 2023, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/understanding-burkina-faso-latest-coup/>.

⁵⁴ Patrick J. McGowan. "African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, no. 3 (2003): 339–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3876235>.

⁵⁵ McGowan, African Military Coups d'état, 1956-2001: Frequency, Trends and Distribution," 339-70.

“strength of civil society, regime legitimacy, and past history of coups.”⁵⁶ They further define coup risk as “a function of deep, structural attributes of government, society, political culture, and state-society relations, whereas triggers are short-term crises that precipitate a coup.” Noting specifically that triggers are not the source of the original risk, and in the absence of structural causes, the presence of triggering factors alone cannot lead to a coup. This connects to Eckstein’s (1965) discussion of preconditions versus precipitants in internal war as triggers and precipitants are the same and preconditions are understood as structural causes.⁵⁷ Understanding coup risk is important in the case of Burkina Faso because coup risk factors not only contribute to the likelihood of a coup but can also contribute to its success.

2.8 COUP-PROOFING THEORY

Holger Albrecht and Eibl Ferdinand (2018) look at coup-proofing strategies, which are deemed to decrease the likelihood of a coup being perpetuated. The authors divide military coups into those of elite-officer or combat-officer, in the case of Burkina Faso elite-officer coups are the predominant form. Their research shows that political liberalization significantly decreases the likelihood of a *combat-officer* coup but suggests that it will increase elite-officer coups.⁵⁸ Counterbalancing the military shows an effective way to avoid *elite-officer coups*. They also, find that higher military spending can reduce the risk of elite-officer coups. Combat-officer versus elite-officer coups require different coup-proofing strategies as different motivations result in these, in the case of Burkina Faso where military coups are elite-officer coups, coup-proofing must take this into account.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Harry Eckstein, “On the Etiology of Internal Wars,” *History and Theory* 4, no. 2 (1965): 133–63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504149>, 140.

⁵⁸ Holger Albrecht and Ferdinand Eibl. “How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups.” *International studies quarterly* (2018).

Jonathan Powell (2012) argues that coup-proofing strategies that lessen the willingness of militaries to intervene, such as an increase in military resources, will reduce the willingness to organize a coup plot, but could actually *increase* the likelihood of success if a coup is attempted. He also argues that economics is less of an indicator of coup predictability than overall instability is.⁵⁹ This means that the overall stability of a state, which typically includes economic, social, and political conditions, contributes more to the predictability of a coup than the status of the economy. Powell also states that military regimes are five times more likely to suffer a coup attempt than civilian-led governments which is important in the context of Burkina Faso as the majority of regimes have been military. He further states that these coups are four times more likely to succeed, which would contribute to further understanding of Burkina Faso's success rate, indicating that military regimes are not only more likely to fall victim to attacks from their own forces, but they are also easy targets. Powell even discusses Burkina Faso explicitly due to their single command structure which Powell argues could potentially create fewer obstacles for coup plotters.⁶⁰

2.9 CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Understanding civilian control and civil-military relations is important in the case study of Burkina Faso as the government is supposed to operate as a presidential republic as detailed in their constitution since independence.⁶¹ Furthermore, a republic operates as a representative democracy which is a form of civilian control.⁶² ⁶³ Croissant et al. (2010) see civil-military

⁵⁹ Albrecht and Eibl, "How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups."

⁶⁰ Jonathan Powell, "Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups D'état." *The Journal of conflict resolution* 56, no. 6 (2012): 1017–1040, 1038.

⁶¹ 1. "Burkina Faso 1991 (Rev. 2015) Constitution," *Constitute*, accessed August 2, 2023, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Burkina_Faso_2015.

⁶² "Field Listing - Government Type," *Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed August 21, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/government-type/>.

⁶³ Should be noted here that the constitution has been suspended following the 2022 coups.

relations as the distribution of decision-making power between civilians and the military.⁶⁴

Civil-military relations lay on a continuum between a military dictatorship and complete civilian oversight, where the former has no civilian input and the latter requires civilian input.⁶⁵ Often times civilian input comes in the form of “political elites who occupy key national government positions in the state”.⁶⁶ Kohn (1997) measures and evaluates the effectiveness of civilian control by weighing the “relative influence of military officers and civilian officials in decisions of state concerning war, internal security, external defense, and military policy (that is, the shape, size, and operating procedures of the military establishment).”⁶⁷ While democracy requires civilian control, Kohn sees the military, by necessity, as the least democratic institution as “martial customs and procedures clash by nature with individual freedoms and civil liberty, the highest values in democratic societies.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Aurel Croissant, David Kuehn, Paul Chambers, and Siegfried O. Wolf. “Beyond the Fallacy of Coup-Is: Conceptualizing Civilian Control of the Military in Emerging Democracies.” *Democratization* 17, no. 5 (2010): 950–975, 954–955.

⁶⁵ Sebastian Elischer. *West African Papers*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019, 8.

⁶⁶ Aurel Croissant, David Kuehn, Paul Chambers, and Siegfried O. Wolf. “Beyond the Fallacy of Coup-Is: Conceptualizing Civilian Control of the Military in Emerging Democracies.” *Democratization* 17, no. 5 (2010): 950–975, 954–955.

⁶⁷ Richard H. Kohn, “How Democracies Control the Military.” *Journal of democracy* 8, no. 4 (1997): 140–153, 143.

⁶⁸ Kohn, “How Democracies Control the Military,” 141.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explain the research methodology used to study the case study and its theoretical impacts. In this research, I have engaged with a historical process tracing using the case study of Burkina Faso to understand whether there are underlying factors or historical contexts that are impacting the high success rate of military coups in Burkina Faso.

Through historical process tracing, I am able to identify causal mechanisms and historical contexts that have contributed to this coup phenomenon. The use of multiple data types will also contribute to the reduction of selection bias and the triangulation of data to support the discussion and findings. The use of a single case study, Burkina Faso, allows for the development of complex theories regarding coup theory and coup risk, making it the optimal approach for this research.

3.2 CASE SELECTION

Before tackling the reasoning behind the use of historical process tracing for this research, it is necessary to understand the selection of the case study. Burkina Faso was chosen

as a case study following the 2022 coups in January and September which reignited a previous pattern of regime change in the country. The complex history of civil-military relations in the country and the region was soon internationally discussed as other West African states fell to the same phenomenon. While much of the international community discussed the Burkina Faso coups in the context of the instability in the Sahel and its impact on the West Africa region, my interest was piqued by the significant historical success of coups in the country which has been extended into the present day. Thus, the research of this case study begins with its independence but also explores the colonial period briefly to understand the institutions and procedures in place prior which may have affected the coup d'état success rate.

3.3 PROCESS TRACING AND SINGLE CASE STUDY: BURKINA FASO

The examination of different theoretical explanations for the high success rate of military coups in Burkina Faso will help understand how these factors are related as well as test the “aspects of theories – the linkages between variables – that are usually only assumed in many other social science methods.”⁶⁹ This single case study works to provide further perspectives and “support and substance to the theoretical assumptions on causal explanations in other studies.”⁷⁰

There are many benefits, as listed above, to a single case study, but the approach still carries limitations. Single case studies can be considered non-generalizable and subject to biased case selection leading to instinctive conclusions.⁷¹ The triangulation of data works to combat these limitations. As Christine Trampuscha and Bruno Palier (2016) see process tracing as assisting in confronting these limitations of a single case study because “Process tracers find it

⁶⁹ Marianne S. Ulriksen and Nina Dadalauri. “Single Case Studies and Theory-Testing: The Knots and Dots of the Process-Tracing Method.” *International journal of social research methodology* 19, no. 2 (2016): 223–239.

⁷⁰ Ulriksen and Dadalauri, “Single Case Studies and Theory-Testing: The Knots and Dots of the Process-Tracing Method,” 236.

⁷¹ John Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

impossible to analyze processes without qualitative data, hence, they use primary sources such as documents and interviews, as well as secondary literature describing the specific outcome. Process tracing also helps solve the problems of selectivity, omitted variable bias, and spurious causation.”⁷²

Process tracing “involves tracing causal mechanisms that link causes (X) with their effects (i.e. outcomes) (Y).”⁷³ Trampuscha and Palier (2016) discuss process tracing being “causal and temporal mechanisms: it is a method for unpacking causality, that aims at studying what happens between X and Y and beyond.”⁷⁴ Therefore, process tracing can “complement the correlational approach in the analysis of causation.”⁷⁵ When looking for causal methods one is describing the underlying processes or actions which are leading to a certain effect.⁷⁶ Beach argues that a “causal mechanism is defined as a theory of a system of interlocking parts that transmits causal forces between a cause (or a set of causes) and an outcome.”⁷⁷ These mechanisms can be represented schematically as $X \rightarrow [A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C] \rightarrow Y$. In the case of Burkina Faso, the research is looking at the causal mechanisms that are seen as having an active role in the cycle of military coups. The causal mechanisms identified in this research to have an impact on military coups in Burkina Faso are as follows; historical context, institutional weakness, civil-military relations, and socio-political dynamics. The equation for process tracing is as follows:

⁷²Christine Trampusch and Bruno Palier. 2016. “Between X and Y: How Process Tracing Contributes to Opening the Black Box of Causality.” *New Political Economy* 21 (5): 437–54, 442..

<https://search-ebscohost-com.mutex.gmu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eoh&AN=1604470&site=ehost-live>.

⁷³ Derek Beach. “It’s All About Mechanisms - What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New political economy* 21, no. 5 (2016): 463–472, 463.

⁷⁴Christine Trampusch and Bruno Palier. 2016. “Between X and Y: How Process Tracing Contributes to Opening the Black Box of Causality.” *New Political Economy* 21 (5): 437–54, 442.

<https://search-ebscohost-com.mutex.gmu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eoh&AN=1604470&site=ehost-live>.

⁷⁵ Trampusch and Palier, “Between X and Y: How Process Tracing Contributes to Opening the Black Box of Causality,” 442.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Derek Beach. “It’s All About Mechanisms - What Process-Tracing Case Studies Should Be Tracing.” *New political economy* 21, no. 5 (2016): 463–472, 465.

$$X \text{ (State Instability)} \rightarrow [A \text{ (Institutional Weakness)} \rightarrow B \text{ (Lack of Coup-Proofing)} \rightarrow C \text{ (Negative Civil-Military Relations)}] \rightarrow Y \text{ (Successful Coup)}$$

3.3.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historical context is vital in the process tracing process as historical context typically involves other causal mechanisms. Bennett and George (1997) describe how a “Process-tracing explanation differs from a historical narrative, as it requires converting a purely historical account that implies or asserts a causal sequence into an analytical explanation couched in theoretical variables that have been identified in the research design.”⁷⁸ In this case study, the variables identified are those above; institutional weakness, civil-military relations, and socio-political dynamics.

3.3.2 INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS

Institutional weakness is measured through a variety of different data sources often provided by larger research organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, The Economist Group, Freedom House, etc. The different sources provide insight into specific causal mechanisms that coup theorists have deemed relevant factors to the onset of military coups. Depending on the publication of the previous theory, these data sets allow for an updated analysis of theorists' previous findings, which can support previous causal mechanism assumptions and explanations.

⁷⁸Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2005.

3.3.3 CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

Civil-military relations in Africa consist of a tumultuous past as colonial militaries still play a role in the overall civil-military relations of the continent. Understanding the historical impact that colonial militaries had on Burkina Faso is important to the current civil-military relations of the country, which is where previously stated historical context will intertwine with other causal mechanisms. Further understanding of current civil-military relations in Burkina Faso will consist of data from various African and international-based sources as well as international organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, etc. Understanding Burkina Faso's constitution and its details regarding military power is also important to the overall civil-military relations. Data and information regarding previous and current civil-military relations in Burkina Faso will then be applied to coup-proofing and overall coup theory which details civil-military relations as a causal mechanism in coup outcome.

3.3.4 SOCIO-POLITICAL DYNAMICS

Socio-Political Dynamics as a causal mechanism will look at the overall social and political dynamics within Burkina Faso which contribute to the success of coups. Political factors can coincide with the institutional weakness but also can stand alone as these factors can individually contribute to military coups outside institutional weakness. Political data and findings here will involve the strength of civil society, regime legitimacy, political violence, and overall political and revolutionary history. These are measured through similar data as institutional weaknesses such as; Freedom House, The Economist Group, Our World in Data,

Transparency International, etc. Social factors, which will also contribute to the overall understanding of the causal mechanisms, include demographic data provided by organizations such as the World Bank, United Nations Population Fund, CIA World Factbook, etc.

Demographic data is important to coup theories which discuss the status of citizens as a contributing factor to coup success. Along with understanding this quantitative data, qualitative data surrounding different ethnic groups and their cultural history with the state contributes to these theories as well. This information is provided through a variety of historical accounts such as *The Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* and Oxford Research Encyclopedias.

3.4 APPLICATION OF CAUSAL MECHANISMS

The causal mechanisms described above will steer the goal of this research. These mechanisms will be discussed in relation to different theories that were explored in the literature review chapter of this thesis. They will further be connected to data collected in the case study and data and findings chapters of this thesis.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The following chapter will begin with the use of the methodology described above. Historical process tracing for this thesis requires covering a significant amount of time. The case study intends to begin the historical process tracing method by giving an outline of events that define the causal mechanisms.

CHAPTER IV - CASE STUDY: BURKINA FASO

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Burkina Faso is a small landlocked country in West Africa. Previously named the Upper Volta, Burkina Faso gained its independence from France in 1960.⁷⁹ The Upper Volta was renamed to Burkina Faso, by previous leader Thomas Sankara, as it translates to “Land of the Upright Men” in Dyula and Mossi. The almost twenty-three million⁸⁰ people of Burkina Faso are often referred to as “Burkinabe” but belong to a variety of different ethnic groups, the most prominent being the Mossi.⁸¹ The Mossi form over half of Burkina Faso’s population but there are approximately sixty other ethnic groups that are split into three “families”; the Voltaic (or Gur), the Mande, and the Peuls (a subgroup of the Fulani).⁸² Due to French colonialism, French is the official language but the majority of the population speaks Mossi or their native languages.⁸³ Approximately 63% of the population is Muslim but Roman Catholics also hold a

⁷⁹ Rebekah Painter. 2022. “Burkina Faso.” *Our World: Burkina Faso*. Great Neck Publishing. doi:10.3331/our_world_481_250088.

⁸⁰ “Burkina Faso,” World Bank Open Data, accessed July 5, 2023, <https://data.worldbank.org/country/BF>.

⁸¹ Rebekah Painter. 2022. “Burkina Faso.” *Our World: Burkina Faso*. Great Neck Publishing. doi:10.3331/our_world_481_250088.

⁸² Pierre Englebert. *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 6.

⁸³ Central Intelligence Agency, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burkina-faso/>.

significant minority at 25%.⁸⁴ The median age of Burkinabe is 18 years old, making Burkina Faso one of the youngest nations.⁸⁵ Burkina Faso is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, ranking in the bottom ten of the United Nations 2021/2022 Human Development Report.⁸⁶ This is partially due to the nearly 90% of the labor force that engages in mostly sustainable agriculture where frequent droughts threaten their livelihoods.⁸⁷ Even with the variety of ethnic groups in the nation, Burkina Faso is unique to an extent compared to other African nations as ethnic conflict and civil disorder due to ethnic differences are limited. Nonetheless, Political and economic instability plague the nation, surpassing most African nations.

4.2 PRE-COLONIAL BURKINA FASO

The first people to settle in the now territory of Burkina Faso were the Mossi in the eleventh and thirteenth centuries⁸⁸, establishing the kingdoms Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso's modern-day capital), Tenkodogo, and Yatenga⁸⁹, while these were largest and most known, other more autonomous kingdoms existed such as Lalgaye and Boulssa.⁹⁰ These smaller kingdoms were not independent from Ouagadougou and although they had differences, they largely shared political ideology and social organization.⁹¹ Mossi kingdoms had a structured political system that even though it was feudal in nature, allowed for forms of legitimization of the king through

⁸⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burkina-faso/>.

⁸⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burkina-faso/>.

⁸⁶ "Country Insights," Human Development Reports, September 8, 2022, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks>.

⁸⁷ Rebekah Painter. 2022. "Burkina Faso." *Our World: Burkina Faso*. Great Neck Publishing. doi:10.3331/our_world_481_250088.

⁸⁸ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), xxvii.

⁸⁹ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (S.I.: ROUTLEDGE, 2019).

⁹⁰ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (S.I.: ROUTLEDGE, 2019), 12.

⁹¹ Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 12.

the peasantry and checks and balances.⁹² Subsistence farming largely dominated the kingdoms, but other forms of economic activity took place through village markets and international trade through Muslim merchants.⁹³ Even with an operating economic system, wealth accumulation in the kingdoms remained limited, even for leaders who often prioritized the redistribution of wealth.⁹⁴ Other stateless groups lived throughout different regions in Burkina Faso operating with their own unique political and economic systems. There are limited historical accounts for the pre-colonial region which is now Burkina Faso but following the arrival of the first Europeans to the territory in 1886,⁹⁵ historians were able to start detailing the struggle against colonial powers. Ten years after the arrival of Europeans, the Upper Volta became part of French West Africa in 1896.⁹⁶

4.3 FRENCH WEST AFRICA

When the French colonized the region that is now Burkina Faso, considerable effort went into dismantling the existing political structures, specifically those of the Mossi.⁹⁷ The colony of Upper Volta was seen as a labor resource during this time due to its dense population, often exporting laborers to other parts of French West Africa.⁹⁸ Resistance and revolts from the population over taxation and forced labor led the French to form the individual colony of Upper Volta in 1919 to reinforce control.⁹⁹ Moreover, French West Africa instituted a draft in October of 1919, where Upper Volta was assigned a draft quota of 5,600, the largest of any other colony

⁹² Ibid, 13.

⁹³ Ibid, 14.

⁹⁴ Ibid 15-16.

⁹⁵ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), xxx.

⁹⁶“Burkina Faso,” Burkina Faso | South African History Online, accessed July 21, 2023, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/burkina-faso#:~:text=Burkina%20Faso%20is%20a%20small,Africa%20since%201896%20until%201960>.

⁹⁷ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (S.I.: ROUTLEDGE, 2019), 20.

⁹⁸ Tony Chafer. *The End of Empire in French West Africa : France's Successful Decolonization*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2002, 163.

⁹⁹ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso: Unsteady Statehood in West Africa* (S.I.: ROUTLEDGE, 2019), 22-23.

in French West Africa.¹⁰⁰ Further information regarding French colonialism of Burkina Faso will be detailed in the Data and Findings chapter as the French legal code of indigénat is key in this research.

4.4 UPPER VOLTA AND INDEPENDENCE

The end of World War II led to many independence and nationalist movements across Africa. By this time, the Upper Volta was considered a French “overseas territory” which allowed for slightly more autonomy over public works and budgets.¹⁰¹ The status of “overseas territory” also developed the territorial assembly where some Burkinabe were able to participate in political life.¹⁰² By the 1950s, “Voltaic nationalists” became more popular in the political sphere, calling for economic development and established political systems.¹⁰³ In 1958 a referendum was posed across West and Central African colonies for a “Franco-African Community” which detailed limited local authority while allowing France to maintain jurisdiction over defense, foreign policy, courts, monetary affairs, economic policy, and external communications.¹⁰⁴ Following acceptance of the referendum, the territorial assembly gathered to choose a new leader as the previous fell to illness.¹⁰⁵ The Mossi leader at the time, Mogho Naaba Kougri, proposed a constitutional monarchy to the assembly which was rejected but resulted in 3,000 armed Mossi warriors outside the assembly for a show of force.¹⁰⁶ The warriors stood down following the threat of military action by France.¹⁰⁷ This form of military aggression within

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), xxxix.

¹⁰¹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 16-17.

¹⁰² Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 18.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 18-19

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 19.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the new political sphere can be seen as an indication of the future of Burkina Faso's method for regime change. Maurice Yaméogo led the territorial assembly with dominance following the show of force from the Mossi aristocracy, often using police forces to harass opposition parties, another indication of what the future held for Burkina Faso.¹⁰⁸

4.5 INDEPENDENT BURKINA FASO

Following Burkina Faso's independence from France, the nation adopted a parliamentary republic government, first electing Maurice Yaméogo in December of 1960.¹⁰⁹ Under Yaméogo, the French colonial legacy lived on as he employed many French as advisors to state services.¹¹⁰ Yaméogo was reelected in October of 1965, but without any opposition candidate as they were barred from running.¹¹¹ Boycotts of legislative election polls followed one month later only to be followed another month later with a general labor strike.¹¹² In January of 1966, the Upper Volta experienced its first military coup with Staff Lt. Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana assuming power.¹¹³ The 1966 Coup d'état set the stage for a future of regime change in Burkina Faso.

4.6 LAMIZANA'S GOVERNMENT

Lamizana made minimal changes during his time in office, only making active changes in pursuit of justice against Yaméogo. A new constitution was adopted in June 1970.¹¹⁴ Elections followed in December of 1970 with the Voltaic Democratic Union – African Democratic Rally (

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹¹⁰ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 22.

¹¹¹ Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 24.

¹¹² Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 1.

¹¹³ Ibid, I.

¹¹⁴ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 29.

Union Démocratique Voltaïque–Rassemblement Démocratique Africain - UDV-RDA) winning the majority of seats and Gérard Kango Ouédraogo forming a government as prime minister in February 1971.¹¹⁵ The West African Sahelian drought, by 1972, had left Northern Burkina Faso with scarce resources.¹¹⁶ The government's lack of response to the crisis coupled with corruption and embezzlement of aid funds led to strikes and protests throughout 1972 and 1973.¹¹⁷ In February 1974, the army dismissed Prime Minister Gérard Kango Ouédraogo and dissolved the constitution under the orders of still President Sangoulé Lamizana who appointed himself prime minister.¹¹⁸ Legislative elections were held again in April 1978.¹¹⁹ The UDV-RDA won 28 of the 57 seats in the National Assembly and The National Union for the Defence of Democracy (*Union Nationale pour la Defense de la Democratie* - UNDD) won 13.¹²⁰ Aboubakar Sangoulé Lamizana was elected as president and Joseph Issoufou Conombo of the UDV-RDA formed a government as prime minister.¹²¹ Labor unions began demonstrations against the Lamizana government in February 1979 which transitioned into union strikes in January and October of 1980.¹²² In November 1980, Colonel Saye Zerbo led a coup against Lamizana suspending the constitution and establishing the Military Committee of Recovery for National Progress (*Comite*

¹¹⁵ "Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹¹⁶ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 29.

¹¹⁷ Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 30.

¹¹⁸ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), liii.

¹¹⁹ McFarland, and Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso*, lv.

¹²⁰ Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹²¹ Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹²² Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lv-lvi.

Militaire de Redressment pout le Progress National – CMRPN) headed by Colonel Saye Zerbo.¹²³

4.7 ZERBO’S GOVERNMENT

Zerbo’s so-called “colonel’s coup”¹²⁴ was short-lived but important in the history of Burkina Faso as Thomas Sankara and Blaise Compaoré, two future leaders of Burkina Faso, were in collaboration with Zerbo.¹²⁵ Both Sankara and Compaoré served as junta members within the CMRPN but reigned in April 1982 only to be arrested soon after they expressed concerns over the new regime.¹²⁶ Zerbo’s regime, like the leaders before him, was plagued by trade unions and teacher strikes.¹²⁷ Zerbo’s unpopularity resulted in another coup in November 1982 led by Col. Gabriel Yoryan Somé.¹²⁸

4.8 OUÉDRAOGO’S RULE

The coup against Zerbo was led by two separate military factions and due to differences on who they wanted to lead, The new People’s Salvation Council’s (*Conseil du Salut du Peuple* – CSP) president, Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, was agreed on as the new president.¹²⁹¹³⁰ The CSP was

¹²³ Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present),” Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹²⁴ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lvi.

¹²⁵ Abdoulie Sawo. “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015.” *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 6.

¹²⁶ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lvii.

¹²⁷ Abdoulie Sawo. “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015.” *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 7.

¹²⁸ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lvii.

¹²⁹ McFarland and Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso*, lvii.

¹³⁰ Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present),” Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023,

seen as far more liberal than previous parties that have ruled Burkina Faso and their election of Thomas Sankara as prime minister in January 1983 solidified this.¹³¹ The CSP soon displayed obvious factionalism as public support for President Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo was dwarfed in comparison to that of Prime Minister Thomas Sankara.¹³² Conservative members of the CSP saw the support of “radical” Sankara as a threat leading to Sankara’s arrest and the dissolving of the CSP.¹³³ Protests erupted across Burkina Faso in support of Sankara’s release.¹³⁴ Burkina Faso was deeply divided by this point and Captain Blaise Compaoré, seen by some as Sankara’s right-hand man at the time, began consolidating further support for Sankara from the para-commando base in Pô.¹³⁵ As resistance support grew, a coup was executed in August 1983 with Thomas Sankara taking power as president and Captain Blaise Compaoré as minister of state to the presidency.¹³⁶

4.9 SANKARA’S GOVERNMENT

Thomas Sankara is considered one of the most prominent revolutionists in Africa and an influential leader in Burkina Faso, gaining the nickname “Africa’s Chev Guevara.”¹³⁷ To many the coup was seen as a revolutionary coup, welcomed by the general public as Sankara had promised significant reforms for the country.¹³⁸ In 1984, Sankara renamed the Upper Volta to Burkina Faso.¹³⁹

<https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹³¹ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lviii.

¹³² Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 45.

¹³³ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lviii.

¹³⁴ McFarland and Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso*, lviii.

¹³⁵ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 47.

¹³⁶ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lix.

¹³⁷ Brian J. Peterson. *Thomas Sankara: A Revolutionary in Cold War Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021, 3.

¹³⁸ Abdoulie Sawo. “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015.” *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 10.

¹³⁹ Sawo, “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015,” 10.

4.9.1 THE AGACHER STRIP WAR

The Agacher Strip War or “Christmas War” began on December 25th, 1985 between Mali and Burkina Faso.¹⁴⁰ The Agacher region is a nearly 100-mile strip along the Burkina Faso northern border which is claimed by Mali.¹⁴¹ After Burkinabè census workers entered the territory, Malian President General Moussa Traoré used the census operation as justification for an attack.¹⁴² The Burkinabè army was far less equipped than the Malian army and dozens of civilians and troops were killed.¹⁴³ The armed forces were weak and ill-equipped, reflecting poorly on the CNR.¹⁴⁴ The war ended five days later in a ceasefire mediated by the Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire) and the territorial dispute was taken to the International Court of Justice with a settlement decided on in 1988 which divided the territory.¹⁴⁵

While Thomas Sankara implemented significant reform in education, health, social, agriculture, and environmental sciences, there were many concerns regarding Sankara’s policy implementation, left-wing ideology, and the growing factionalism within the CNR .¹⁴⁶ These concerns paved the way for another coup in October 1987 which led to the assassination of Thomas Sankara and twelve other civilians and soldiers.¹⁴⁷

4.10 COMPAORÉ’S REGIME

¹⁴⁰ “Armed Conflict Events Data,” Agacher Strip War 1985, accessed September 2, 2023, <https://onwar.com/data/bfomli1985.html>.

¹⁴¹ “Armed Conflict Events Data,” Agacher Strip War 1985, accessed September 2, 2023, <https://onwar.com/data/bfomli1985.html>.

¹⁴² Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 66.

¹⁴³ Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 66.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 66.

¹⁴⁵ “Armed Conflict Events Data,” Agacher Strip War 1985, accessed September 2, 2023, <https://onwar.com/data/bfomli1985.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 66.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 66.

Thomas Sankara's assassination and overthrow was led by his then right-hand man Blaise Compaore who helped bring Sankara into power in 1983.¹⁴⁸ Blaise Compaore had a similar military education background as Sankara, attending military academies, receiving para-commando training, and other military training abroad where he would eventually meet Sankara in Morocco.¹⁴⁹ Compaoré created the The Organization for People's Democracy-Labor Movement (*Organisation pour la Democratie Populaire – Mouvement du Travail – ODP/MT*) in April of 1989.¹⁵⁰ A new constitution was adopted in 1991, setting up a multi-party system allowing for presidential and parliamentary elections.¹⁵¹ Blaise Compaoré would maintain a semi-authoritarian rule for the next twenty-seven years in Burkina Faso which was riddled with protests and opposition suppression.¹⁵² Compaoré was forced to resign in October 2014 after widespread protests sparked by his desire to amend the constitution to stay in power longer.¹⁵³

4.11 THE NEW BURKINA FASO

An interim government was created along with the National Transitional Council (NTC) and Michel Kafando was appointed transitional president.¹⁵⁴ The planned elections for October 2015 were soon derailed by a failed coup in September 2015.¹⁵⁵ General Gilbert Diendéré, head

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 11.

¹⁵⁰ Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹⁵¹ Abdoulie Sawo. "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015." *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 12.

¹⁵² Sawo, "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015," 12-13.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 13.

¹⁵⁴ Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

¹⁵⁵ Abdoulie Sawo. "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015." *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 13.

of the Regiment of Presidential Security (*Regiment de Sécurité Présidentielle* – RSP), arrested the interim regime and demanded changes to electoral laws regarding military involvement.¹⁵⁶ The military coup was short-lived and widely unpopular resulting in the army, the United Nations, the African Union, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) pressuring the coup leaders to allow for NTC to continue.¹⁵⁷ The military junta handed power back over to Kafando seven days later, making the September 2015 military coup the only coup d'état failure for Burkina Faso.¹⁵⁸ Elections were held in November 2015, electing Roch Marc Christian Kaboré as president.¹⁵⁹

The failure of the 2015 coup, along with the popular uprising and international condemnation, painted a hopeful picture for Burkina Faso to continue a path of military to civilian rule. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was reelected in November of 2020, but with increasing security concerns due to terrorism in many regions of the country, many were unable to cast votes.¹⁶⁰ Understanding the security situation in the region is vital to the understanding of the subsequent coups d'état in 2022.

4.12 CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION IN BURKINA FASO AND WEST AFRICA

Following the United States-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) mission in Libya against Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, a security vacuum opened up in the region allowing for the distribution of weapons across Africa to fuel insurgency and extremism.¹⁶¹ These

¹⁵⁶ Sawo, “The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015,” 13.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 14.

¹⁶⁰ FRANCE 24, “Burkina Faso’s Kaboré Wins Re-Election, According to Full Preliminary Results,” France 24, November 26, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201126-burkina-s-kabor%C3%A9-wins-re-election-according-to-full-preliminary-results>.

¹⁶¹ Stewart M Patrick, “Collateral Damage: How Libyan Weapons Fueled Mali’s Violence,” Council on Foreign Relations, January 29, 2013, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/collateral-damage-how-libyan-weapons-fueled-malis-violence>.

weapons quickly came into the hands of terrorist groups in West Africa, with the majority influx beginning in Mali.¹⁶² The terrorism activity spread into Northern Burkina Faso and quickly expanded into the East and South.¹⁶³ The main groups currently involved in the areas include: Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Ansar ul-Islam.¹⁶⁴ The increasing capacity and territory acquisition of these groups have left nearly two million Burkinabe displaced¹⁶⁵ and forty percent of Burkina Faso's territory outside of state control.¹⁶⁶

4.13 ROCH MARC CHRISTIAN KABORE'S REACTION TO INSECURITY

As security concerns grew in Burkina Faso, Kabore used the situation to limit civil liberties and rights.¹⁶⁷ The nation's criminal code was amended in June 2019 to criminalize acts that may "demoralize" the state security forces "by whatever means".¹⁶⁸ A state of emergency was declared on December 31, 2018, restricting the right to assembly.¹⁶⁹ Mobile internet provisions were cut in November 2021 and January 2022 and although many Burkinabe do not have smartphones, the intention was to further limit mobilization efforts against the regime.¹⁷⁰ Many trade unions, students, teachers, and general civilians began protesting against Kabore's government handling of the security situation and attacks by non-state armed actors.¹⁷¹

¹⁶² Patrick, "Collateral Damage: How Libyan Weapons Fueled Mali's Violence."

¹⁶³ <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/02/15/violent-extremism-in-the-sahel-strengthening-grip-west-africa-mali-burkina-faso-niger-jihadi/>

¹⁶⁴ Adele Orosz, "Violent Extremism in the Sahel Is Strengthening Its Grip in West Africa," Africa at LSE, February 15, 2022, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/02/15/violent-extremism-in-the-sahel-strengthening-grip-west-africa-mali-burkina-faso-niger-jihadi/>.

¹⁶⁵ "The World's Most Neglected Displacement Crisis," Norwegian Refugee Council, June 1, 2023, <https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/neglected-2022/the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crises-2022.pdf>.

¹⁶⁶ "State Controls Just 60 Percent of Burkina Faso: ECOWAS Mediator," Al Jazeera, June 18, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/18/state-controls-only-60-percent-of-burkina-faso-mediator>.

¹⁶⁷ Bettina Engels. "Transition Now? Another Coup D'état in Burkina Faso." Review of African political economy 49, no. 172 (2022): 315–326.

¹⁶⁸ Engels, "Transition Now? Another Coup D'état in Burkina Faso," 315–326.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

4.14 A COUP D'ETAT FOR "SECURITY"

On January 24, 2022, a military coup was led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandogo Damiba who justified the coup by the failure of the Kabore government to control the security situation.¹⁷² The constitution was suspended and the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration (*Mouvement patriotique pour la sauvegarde et la restauration* - MPSR) assumed power.¹⁷³ Damiba, like many other Burkina Faso coup d'état leaders, has significant military education in France as well as training in the United States.¹⁷⁴ Priorities of Damiba's new junta became clear for many Burkinabe when military leaders met with the mining chamber and mining companies to guarantee their ability to continue mining activities, even with border restrictions placed following the coup.¹⁷⁵ While Damiba's coup was justified by many due to the pressing security issues, the issue continued to escalate under his rule. Attacks by armed groups were reported to have increased twenty-three percent just five months after he took over.¹⁷⁶ The discontent within the army and the civilian population transformed into a second military coup in just one year led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré.¹⁷⁷

4.15 A COUP FOR A COUP

In September 2022, officers led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré overthrew Damiba and installed Traoré as the transitional president. The military junta justified their actions on the same

¹⁷² "Burkina Faso's Coup and Political Situation: All You Need to Know," Al Jazeera, October 5, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/5/coup-in-burkina-faso-what-you-need-to-know>.

¹⁷³ Bettina Engels. "Transition Now? Another Coup D'état in Burkina Faso." *Review of African political economy* 49, no. 172 (2022): 315–326, 322.

¹⁷⁴ Engels, "Transition Now? Another Coup D'état in Burkina Faso," 315–326, 323.

¹⁷⁵ "Burkina Faso : Coup Leader Damiba Reassures Endeavour's Local Head over Gold Mines," *Africa Intelligence*, January 31, 2022, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/west-africa/2022/01/31/coup-leader-damiba-reassures-endeavour-s-local-head-over-gold-mines,109730265-bre>.

¹⁷⁶ "Burkina Faso's Coup and Political Situation: All You Need to Know," Al Jazeera, October 5, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/5/coup-in-burkina-faso-what-you-need-to-know>.

¹⁷⁷ "Understanding Burkina Faso's Latest Coup," *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, October 28, 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/understanding-burkina-faso-latest-coup/>.

grounds as Damiba's junta, the growing security situation.¹⁷⁸ Traoré has promised a return to civilian rule by 2024, but allowing for a military or civilian leader.¹⁷⁹

The significant history of military coups in Burkina Faso and their continuation in the modern-day point to a pattern that military coups in the country are a form of politics by other means which draws on the classic von Clausewitz argument of war as a continuation of politics by other means.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ "Burkina Faso's Coup and Political Situation: All You Need to Know," Al Jazeera, October 5, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/10/5/coup-in-burkina-faso-what-you-need-to-know>.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Mcallister, "Who Is Ibrahim Traore, the Soldier behind Burkina Faso's Latest Coup?," Reuters, October 4, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/who-is-ibrahim-traore-soldier-behind-burkina-fasos-latest-coup-2022-10-03/>.

¹⁸⁰ Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*. Edited by Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton shorts ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008, 7.

CHAPTER V - DATA AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapter discusses the data and findings gathered using historical process tracing. This section will follow Burkina Faso's history from its colonial era into the modern day in order to gather a greater understanding of all the factors at play. The chapter follows a similar timeline to that of the case-study chapter but will go further into detail regarding the variable identified.

5.2 STATE INSTABILITY IN BURKINA FASO

State instability is seen as the core motivation for a coup d'état. While different factors can influence the level of instability a country faces, the general concept of state instability is seen as a precondition for a coup. In Burkina Faso, state instability has consistently been a precondition of all the coups d'état that occurred since independence. This instability is created through many events such as protests, violent insurgencies in the region, and recent coups.

Political instability in Burkina Faso results from the disconnection between civil society and the state.¹⁸¹ The state itself has never been seen as a legitimate force to the population.¹⁸² Clientelism is a political system in which power or financial support is given in return for political support¹⁸³, and in Burkina Faso, this is often how civil society and the state cooperate, resulting in a fragile relationship.¹⁸⁴ When clientelism is absent, and the state is not relying on cooperation but instead coercion, civil society will retaliate, often in the form of strikes or protests. Strikes and protests have proven an effective tool for Burkina Faso's civil society, often resulting in political action, but this cycle of cooperation, coercion, and submission has yet to result in an effective governance structure or prolonged stability. Furthermore, while protests have resulted in policy change, coups are more likely to succeed during protests as the military can use continued protests as legitimization for their seizure of power.¹⁸⁵

While state instability is a precondition for a coup d'état, it is not simply enough to state that state instability will cause a coup, and more so, one cannot state that state instability will lead to a successful coup. Most states globally have experienced state instability, or are currently, but have not fallen victim to a coup attempt, let alone a successful coup. Other variables take place at the same time during this instability that allows for the success of a coup d'état. The variables identified in this research that have the largest effect on the coup success rate in Burkina Faso are institutional weakness, lack of coup-proofing, and hostile civil-military relations. Institutional weakness can be seen as a broad variable among the latter but in Burkina

¹⁸¹ Pierre Englebert. *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 69.

¹⁸² Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 69.

¹⁸³ "Clientelism Definition & Meaning," Merriam-Webster, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/clientelism>.

¹⁸⁴ Pierre Englebert. *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 70.

¹⁸⁵ Yukawa, Taku, Kaoru Hidaka, Kaori Kushima, and Masafumi Fujita. "Coups D'état and a Democratic Signal: The Connection Between Protests and Coups after the Cold War." *Journal of peace research* 59, no. 6 (2022): 828–843.

Faso, the historical and current developments that influence the prolongation of institutional weakness are vital to the evolution of coup-proofing and lack of proper civil-military relations.

5.3 INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS

Institutional weakness in Burkina Faso continues to be the norm for most Burkinabe. Since independence, many citizens saw that the state lacked authority and legitimacy.¹⁸⁶ Ernest Harsch, an African research scholar who wrote two books on Burkina Faso, states in his book *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, “They [Burkinabe] did not see themselves as owing allegiance to or being served by those who occupied government offices, presided over courtrooms, or rode around in military vehicles... The basic problem derived from the state’s colonial origins.”¹⁸⁷ This argument is reinforced by Pierre Englebert who sees the state as being set up against civil society during the colonial era and then continuing into independent Burkina Faso through military occupation, political oppression, and economic exploitation.¹⁸⁸ In order to understand how institutional weakness has evolved in Burkina Faso, one has to understand Burkina Faso’s history under colonial rule.

5.3.1 FRENCH WEST AFRICA

The French ruled most of West Africa since the “scramble for Africa” occurred in the 1880s and 1890s. French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française or AOF) was a federation of eight colonies: Dahomey (now Benin), Haute-Volta (Burkina Faso), Côte d’Ivoire, Guinée (Guinea), Soudan français (Mali), Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.¹⁸⁹ The region that is now

¹⁸⁶ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 3.

¹⁸⁷ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ Pierre Englebert. *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998. 69.

¹⁸⁹ Huillery, Elise. “The Black Man’s Burden: The Cost of Colonization of French West Africa.” *The Journal of economic history* 74, no. 1 (2014): 1–38, 4

Burkina Faso was originally part of the French West African colony known as “Soudan” or “Haut-Senegal et Niger”, these names were both used at different times.¹⁹⁰ It was not until 1919 that Burkina Faso would be established as its own colony, Haute-Volta (Upper Volta).¹⁹¹ The French installed new institutions at the state and local level where most senior positions were filled by French and some junior posts were allocated to Burkinabe who could speak and write French.¹⁹² The local commandants were supposed to function as “chiefs” and even in Mossi regions, where pre-colonial state structures existed, the French dismantled those systems as they clashed with their idea of a republic.¹⁹³ In 1932, the colony of the Upper Volta was dismantled and incorporated into Côte d’Ivoire under the name “Haute Côte d’Ivoire”.¹⁹⁴ Some smaller regions of the former Haute-Volta were incorporated into Soudan (Mali) and Niger.¹⁹⁵ This was largely done by France to make the Upper Volta’s greatest resource at the time, its labor force, available to other colonies.¹⁹⁶ Colonial subjects were governed under a French legal code known as indigénat where labor and military service were compulsory with refusal punishable by fine or imprisonment.¹⁹⁷

5.3.2 INDIGÉNANT IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA

Gregory Mann, a historian of West and francophone Africa, describes the indigénat as “A ‘regime of exception’ based on rule by decree, enacted in often arbitrary and sometimes spectacular punishments, and concerned primarily with asserting administrative power.”¹⁹⁸ The

¹⁹⁰ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 12.

¹⁹¹ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 12.

¹⁹² Ibid, 13.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 14.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, 17.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 16.

¹⁹⁸ Gregory Mann. “WHAT WAS THE INDIGÉNAT? THE ‘EMPIRE OF LAW’ IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA.” *Journal of African history* 50, no. 3 (2009): 331–353, 333

indigénat was first established in Algeria in 1881 but was then spread to other French colonial holdings including French West Africa in 1904, although a colonial court system was introduced in 1903 to the territory.¹⁹⁹ Courts were operating under both “customary” and colonial law but there was also a third form of law also functioning as an unspoken and partially outlined sector of “non-law”.²⁰⁰ Essentially, “larger” crimes such as murder and theft were dictated by colonial tribunals with local notables controlled by French commandants.²⁰¹ However, loosely defined “offenses” fell under arbitrary sanctions by local commandants who could impose fines, jail time, or bondage in the case of non-payment of fines.²⁰² This allowed colonial administrators and commandants to institute immediate punishments for any challenge to their personal authority and the colonial state, real or perceived.²⁰³ Furthermore, indigénat allowed commandants to deliver “flexible injustice.” Punishments were often based on the perceived value held by the transgressor, where someone with property could be fined while someone who did not hold property could be imprisoned.²⁰⁴ Mahmood Mamdani (2018) further recounted this practice stating, “Call it white privilege, rule by decree, or administrative justice, the point about the indigénat that set it apart from normal practice in the colonies was only that it crudely and brazenly put on the law books as rules the gist of day-to-day practice in the colonies.”²⁰⁵ Frequent revisions to the indigénat reduced and expanded the set of offenses that commandants could pursue against the population.²⁰⁶

¹⁹⁹ Mann, “WHAT WAS THE INDIGÉNAT? THE ‘EMPIRE OF LAW’ IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA,” 333.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 333.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid, 334.

²⁰⁴ Mahmood Mamdani. *Citizen and Subject : Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. New paperback edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018, 126.

²⁰⁵ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject : Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, 127.

²⁰⁶ Gregory Mann. “WHAT WAS THE INDIGÉNAT? THE ‘EMPIRE OF LAW’ IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA.” *Journal of African history* 50, no. 3 (2009): 331–353, 336.

The dismantling of the indigénat came in different waves of reform concerning citizenship that was happening in France during and after World War II, but while this deconstruction took place, much of French West Africa was left uninformed strategically by commandants who wanted to hold authority.²⁰⁷ The complete end of the indigénat is more likely to have taken place when French colonial states gained independence. The impact of the dissolution is best described by Mann (2009) who argues that “with the end of the indigénat, a long period in which power emanated from a central figure, the commandant, rather than from laws or institutions – a period of virtually pre-modern sovereignty in colonial rule – came to a close.”²⁰⁸ With nearly forty years of lack of rule of law in French West Africa, the democratic environment or culture that was seen as central to building future institutions was stripped under colonial rule.

5.3.3 THE COST OF COLONIZATION

Scholars and historians often debate the economic impact of colonialism in regard to the economic cost and benefits placed on both colonies and colonizer states. Elise Huillery (2014) compiled first-hand budgetary data²⁰⁹, financial transfers between France to French West Africa, and transfers between French West Africa to France during the colonial period. The data and analysis regarding the financial impact colonialism had on French West Africa is beneficial to the understanding of how France contributed to institution building in French West Africa and more specifically, Burkina Faso.

²⁰⁷ Mann, “WHAT WAS THE INDIGÉNAT? THE ‘EMPIRE OF LAW’ IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA.” 347-51.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 351.

²⁰⁹ The author distinguishes subsidies (public aid) from loans (investments). Stating “That distinction, or rather the failure to make it is a major reason why the budgetary cost of colonization has been misinterpreted so far.” (5)

The author finds that between 1844 and 1957, France allocated an average of 0.29% of its public expenditures to French West Africa colonization.²¹⁰ Furthermore, of the 0.29% spent, military costs to continue conquest accounted for 80% and central administration in Paris 4%.²¹¹ This meant that subsidies provided to French West Africa were 16% of the average annual cost and less than 0.05% of France's annual total expenditures were allocated to French West Africa's development.²¹² From 1907 to 1957, France provided approximately 2% of French West Africa's public revenue with the other 98% coming from local taxes in the territory.²¹³ Moreover, this revenue was used to fund the cost of French civil servants whose salaries were non-proportionate to the financial capacity of the local population as more than 13% of the local public expenditures were used to support the French in French West Africa.²¹⁴ This data begins to show a pattern of the economic impact of colonization "burdening" the African native more than the colonizer. The author continues to support this argument by stating that "from 1844 to 1957, military expenditures amounted to 2.211 billion (1914 francs), expenditures for the central colonial administration amount to 247.31 million (1914 francs), and net subsidies to AOF amounted to 750.46 million (1914 francs)."²¹⁵ Compared to the 3.2 billion (1914 francs) impact on cumulative domestic production from French West Africa²¹⁶ which had profited France during this period, French West Africa's contribution to the French economy exceeded that of France to the territory. West Africans were responsible for financing the majority of the cost of running and

²¹⁰ Elise Huillery. "The Black Man's Burden: The Cost of Colonization of French West Africa." *The Journal of economic history* 74, no. 1 (2014): 1–38, 5

²¹¹ Huillery, "The Black Man's Burden: The Cost of Colonization of French West Africa," 5.

²¹² *Ibid*, 5.

²¹³ *Ibid*, 6.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 25.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

developing French West Africa with their resources, while also contributing to the mass salaries of French administrators.²¹⁷

5.4 EARLY INSTITUTION BUILDING

The first institutions in Burkina Faso to include the native population came in 1947 when the Upper Volta retained its previous colonial borders and administered it as a French “territory”.²¹⁸ This followed the dismantling of the indigénat which reverted much of the local authority to Mossi chiefs but also established a territorial assembly through the French Administration.²¹⁹ The first elections for the territorial assembly took place in June 1948 with 95% of the adult population restricted from participating.²²⁰ This new institution building in the territory forced Burkinabe to start participating in a form of political life and party politics, although this was limited to a small fraction of the population. Elected officials in the territorial assembly received high salaries and perks which resulted in aggressive competition, often involving electoral fraud and violence.²²¹

Following independence, Maurice Yaméogo made minimal changes to the colonial inherited state structures. While Yaméogo attempted to limit the “feudal” practices of chiefs, state courts and traditional courts run by chiefs existed in parallel.²²² State bureaucracy in the cities performed ineffectively with long delays and sometimes stolen or embezzled funds.²²³ Yaméogo failed to tackle corruption within his political circle, but often anti-corruption measures were aimed at his political opponents, repressing much of the already small political sphere.²²⁴

²¹⁷ Ibid, 34.

²¹⁸ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 17.

²¹⁹ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 18.

²²⁰ Ibid, 18.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid, 23.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

Following Yaméogo's expulsion from Burkina Faso's government, Lieutenant Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana assumed power and took small steps towards strengthening the weak institutions.

5.5 LIEUTENANT COLONEL SANGOULÉ LAMIZANA'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT

Lamizana's time in office was one of modest changes but his government's pursuit of justice against Yaméogo, largely due to public pressure, did bring a level of trust to the developing justice system.²²⁵ Furthermore, Lamizana's anti-corruption efforts through economic policies led Burkina Faso to clear overdue debt payments, strengthen tax collections, and save enough money to budget for higher public salaries and investments.²²⁶ These policies had a large effect in the cities, angering many trade unions, but for the most part, Burkinabe still lived in villages outside the reach of state institutions. Soon it was clear that the chief authority, which governed the majority population, served as an immediate source of power or government that lacked democratic institutions.²²⁷

5.5.1 THE SECOND REPUBLIC

By the late 1960s, party politicians started calling for a return to civilian rule leading Lamizana to form a committee to draft a new constitution.²²⁸ In June of 1970, a new constitution was adopted, creating the "Second Republic."²²⁹ The constitution detailed a National Assembly that held legislative authority and budgeting oversight, but also significant authority for the military.²³⁰ The military had the power to "pursue any action of national construction", allowing

²²⁵ Ibid, 26.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid, 27-28.

²²⁹ Ibid, 29.

²³⁰ Ibid, 27.

for significant involvement in public life, and held one-third of minister positions.²³¹

Furthermore, the position of the president would not be elected, instead, it was designated to the military personality of the highest rank, in this case, Lamizana.²³² Gérard Kango Ouédraogo of the Voltaic Democratic Union - African Democratic Rally (*Union Démocratique Voltaïque–Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* - UDV-RDA) was named prime minister.²³³ Much of the previous economic and social policies under Lamizana continued in the new government.

5.5.2 SAHELIAN DROUGHT AND GOVERNMENT REACTION

The weakness of the new government and its institutions were exposed during the 1968-1974 drought and starvation which impacted the entire West African Sahel.²³⁴ Northern Burkina Faso was impacted significantly and food was increasingly scarce between 1972-73.²³⁵ The government's official grain marketing structures were incredibly weak and underfinanced leading merchants and private transport owners to capitalize on the scarcities.²³⁶ The government took no action during this time to limit the control merchants held on grain disbursement and were accused that this was not due to the inability to do so, but due to the UDV-RDA

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid, 27.

²³³ "Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

²³⁴ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), li.

²³⁵ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 29.

²³⁶ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 30.

government's relationship with the merchants.²³⁷ Civilian and military personnel were implicated in embezzling aid funds and stealing relief shipments for resale on the black market with only a few minor-level figures receiving short prison sentences.²³⁸ The lack of action during the drought and the uncovering of corruption led labor federations and unions to demand minimum wage raises and ease of taxes, threatening a general strike in 1972.²³⁹ While a wage increase was achieved at the end of 1972, teacher's unions continued to carry out "illegal strikes" throughout 1973.²⁴⁰ Prime Minister Ouédraogo considered the strikes "insurrectional" and coupled with growing opposition in his own party, felt his position was being attacked.²⁴¹ Lamizana used the growing public outrage to justify a coup on February 8th, 1974, dissolving the National Assembly and suspending the constitution.²⁴²

5.5.3 ANOTHER ERA OF MILITARY RULE UNDER LAMIZANA

Lamizana began a new era of direct rule under a military decree with the military playing the main role in administration. Calls for a return to civilian rule began almost immediately and in December 1975, unions and student federations called for a two-day general strike.²⁴³ Lamizana fell quickly to demands and began steps towards constitutional rule, but social unrest continued.²⁴⁴ On November 27th, 1977, a new constitution was approved, creating the "Third Republic."²⁴⁵ The new constitution allowed for direct election of the president and an elected

²³⁷ Ibid, 30.

²³⁸ Ibid, 30.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), liiii.

²⁴³ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 31.

²⁴⁴ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 32.

²⁴⁵ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), liv.

National Assembly.²⁴⁶ By 1978, Lamizana was elected president of the Third Republic.²⁴⁷ Joseph Issoufou Conombo from the UDV-RDA formed a government as prime minister.²⁴⁸ With nearly fifteen years in power, Lamizana was unable to bring any social or political stability to the nation which can be seen in the continuous strikes through 1980.²⁴⁹ Twenty years following independence, Burkina Faso was still unable to form effective state institutions or administrations resulting in continued divisions amongst the general public, the elite, politicians, and the military. The lack of true government authority resulted in another coup on November 25th, 1980 with Colonel Saye Zerbo ousting Lamizana.²⁵⁰

5.6 COLONEL ZERBO'S MILITARY RULE

Colonel Zerbo suspended the constitution and dissolved the National Assembly promising reform to civil service and discipline against the former state administration.²⁵¹ While Zerbo received support from many unions at the beginning of his rule, a new economic austerity program turned many unions against his rule.²⁵² While it was clear the government required significant economic reform, the root of the issue was the lack of proper management and supervision of spending. Ministries and departments operated with minimal checks and balances which led to billions of CFAs (West African CFA franc) unaccounted for.²⁵³ Although Zerbo had campaigned against corruption and embezzlement, it was clear there were minimal policy

²⁴⁶ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 32.

²⁴⁷ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lv.

²⁴⁸ "Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," Government Public Service and International Studies, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/upper-voltaburkina-faso-1960-present/>.

²⁴⁹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 33.

²⁵⁰ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lvi.

²⁵¹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 35.

²⁵² Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 35.

²⁵³ Ibid, 35.

changes or justice efforts taking place. Unions continued to be the most vocal against fraud and corruption leading to Colonel Zerbo suspending the right to strike.²⁵⁴ Zerbo's regime proved itself to be more authoritarian than previous military regimes in Burkina Faso. This led to a coup on November 7th, 1982 overthrowing Zerbo and leading to the death of five.²⁵⁵

5.7 A COUP OF CONFUSION

The Council of Popular Salvation (*Conseil de Salut du Peuple* - CSP) headed by Major Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo took control and appointed Thomas Sankara as prime minister in January 1983.²⁵⁶ The regime of Ouedraogo was supposed to be one of significant reform and rebuilding for the Upper Volta with a smooth transition back to civilian rule.²⁵⁷ The CSP however continued a path of repression angering the army, trade unions, and students across the country.²⁵⁸ The regime of Ouedraogo was also flawed in factionalism across the government and army which resulted in the expulsion of Thomas Sankara as prime minister in 1982 and his eventual detention.²⁵⁹ Sankara received significant support from the army and students following his arrest with protests led by Capt. Blaise Compaore called for his release.²⁶⁰

The popular uprisings against Ouedraogo's regime prompted the fourth successive military coup in Burkina Faso led by Blaise Compaore in August 1983 that installed Thomas Sankara as the president of the National Council of the Revolution (*Conseil National de la Révolution* - CNR).

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 37.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 39.

²⁵⁶ Abdoulie Sawo. "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015." *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 8.

²⁵⁷ Sawo, "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015," 8.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lviii.

The new National Revolutionary Council (*Conseil National de la Revolution* – CNR) was formed with civilian and military members and proclaimed their goals of mass economic, social, and political reforms.²⁶¹ The CNR saw the previous government institutions and political parties as an extension of the French colonial administration and sought to rebuild Burkina Faso as a “popular democracy.”²⁶²

5.8 THOMAS SANKARA AND THE NEW BURKINA FASO

For many across Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara’s coup and rise to power was seen as a “revolutionary coup,” one that was welcomed by much of the public. The CNR was tasked with not just reforming institutions, but building many of these from scratch. Even in the 1980s, much of rural Burkina Faso was still governed by chief authority and the CNR sought to implement more direct rule.²⁶³ The implementation of new local structures across Burkina Faso was welcomed by some and opposed by others, more specifically chiefs and local elites who had benefited from the previous lack of state authority in rural territories.²⁶⁴ In the capital Ouagadougou, and some larger cities, the CNR worked to limit the bureaucracy which had limited civil services previously.²⁶⁵ Furthermore, the CNR worked to curb public cynicism by significantly reducing the perceived benefits that officials gained from being in office such as reducing the government’s auto fleet and having to fly economy class.²⁶⁶ This was largely done to shed the perception of the previous government’s wealthy lifestyles that still tainted the image of the new CNR government.

²⁶¹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 49-50.

²⁶² Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 50.

²⁶³ Ibid, 52.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, 53.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 54.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

5.8.1 A NEW PATHWAY FOR JUSTICE

The justice system, since independence, in Burkina Faso was seen as largely ineffective. To show their hardline on corruption, the CNR set up the People's Revolutionary Tribunals (TPRs), a new court that prosecuted economic corruption charges against those who held administrative and political positions.²⁶⁷ The TPRs allowed the public to watch justice performed directly and transparently which was unlike previous court systems. The TPRs were also unique because they targeted officials in state institutions such as the grain marketing board and public health services or private merchants who benefited from public sector corruption.²⁶⁸

While the TPRs sought to display a hardline on corruption, the outcome did not reflect this. Many defendants were acquitted and those who received prison sentences or monetary fines served minimal time and fine impositions.²⁶⁹ The localized tribunals in rural Burkina Faso did however create a new pathway for justice which did not support the previous customary court views of social hierarchy. The previous court system, separate from that of the TPRs, also received reform. The backlog of criminal and civil cases was tackled by professional magistrates as well as TPR judges and CPR (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution) delegates.²⁷⁰ Prison systems were also reformed with facilities improved with vegetable gardens and literacy classes added.²⁷¹ The continued reform of the judicial system, like many other reform processes, brought divisions among the CNR regarding collective and individual rights and the power held by the TPRs.²⁷²

5.8.2 MILITARY UNDER REVIEW

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 56.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 60.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 61.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid, 62.

Following the path of other institutions, the CNR set its sights on reforming the armed forces. Army generals were forced to resign and senior officials who opposed the 1983 coup were imprisoned or sentenced to death.²⁷³ The death sentences stood in contrast with new ideas of a reformed justice system. Much like the other Burkinabè institutions, the military suffered from corruption and illegal profiteering schemes, but instead of reducing spending, the military expenditures grew for the first few years.²⁷⁴ Many officers had been previously sent abroad for military training, including Thomas Sankara, but in 1984 the first Burkinabè officers' academy was established in Pô, the previous home to the "Sankara revolutionary camp."²⁷⁵ Specialized training would still take place abroad and equipment support was provided by France but the academy was seen as establishing further sovereignty.²⁷⁶ While reform was taking place within the military, there was no real reform in the military's prominent role in political and social life or government affairs.

5.8.3 ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: FAILURE OR SUCCESS?

As justice and military institutions fell under reform, the CNR faced significant battles in economic and social development. Burkina Faso was still a very poor country that relied heavily on foreign aid. Sankara rejected policy proposals from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, seeing structural adjustment programs as hindering the CNR's revolution and economic independence goals.²⁷⁷ The CNR created a forum for public debates over the national budget and open hearings regarding state-owned enterprises' performance and financial management.²⁷⁸ The government also struggled to reorganize tax authority as tax collection was

²⁷³ Ibid, 64.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 64-65.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 68.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, 69.

ineffective.²⁷⁹ The CNR implemented heavy tax monitoring operations to ensure businesses and professionals were paying taxes and developed an “extensive tax recovery operation” with an estimated CFA3.4 billion collected at the end of the first week in major cities.²⁸⁰ The government did see economic improvements during this time as GDP grew 5.3% per year between 1983 and 1989 with a per capita growth rate of 2.6%, this was considered higher than average in Sub-Saharan Africa.²⁸¹ Output in the food and crop sector also rose at an annual rate of 14% between 1983 and 1988.²⁸² The UNICEF International Child Development Centre Office of Research’s report by Kimseyinga Savadogo and Claude Wetta (1991) on Burkina Faso’s Self-Imposed Adjustment stated,

“For the first time in its history, the country [Burkina Faso] witnessed wide public participation in the development of human resources and constructions of schools and health centers in villages. The system of ‘popular tribunals’ increased accountability in public services. Villagers were made aware of the importance of education and displayed their willingness to participate both through physical labour and financial contributions.”²⁸³

While the authors' outlook appears positive for Burkina Faso, they noted the fragility of this progress as production and industrialization require improvements to continue this trend.²⁸⁴

Steps towards nation-building in Burkina Faso also took place in more symbolic ways. Previously the Upper Volta, the renaming to Burkina Faso was done by the CNR as a way to

²⁷⁹ Ibid, 70.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Kimseyinga Savadogo and Claude Wetta. (1991). “The Impact of Self-imposed Adjustment: The Case of Burkina Faso, 1983-1989”, *Innocenti Occasional Papers, Economic Policy Series*, no. 15, International Child Development Centre, Florence, 43.

²⁸² Savadogo and Wetta, “The Impact of Self-imposed Adjustment: The Case of Burkina Faso, 1983-1989,” 43.

²⁸³ Ibid, 45.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

shed their colonial identity while also incorporating different ethnic groups in the symbolic act.²⁸⁵ Burkina Faso is often translated to “Land of the Upright Men” or “The Land of Men of Dignity”.²⁸⁶ *Burkina* means “men of dignity” or “worthy people” in Moré, *Faso* means “house”, “country”, or “republic” in Western Diola, and the suffix *-bè* or *-nabè* which is used in describing the people of Burkina Faso as Burkinabè means “inhabitants” in the Northern Peuls’ language.²⁸⁷ These three languages, combined to create a name that encompasses the nation, derive from the nation's three main vernacular languages of the major ethnic groups.²⁸⁸ The defense committees also worked to promote social unity in rural and urban areas. These mobilization efforts were systematized into the Programme Populaire de développement (PPD) that “coordinated local initiatives nationally and extended them to new areas.”²⁸⁹ The PPD led to the construction of schools, water wells, and health clinics as well as creating an intense youth vaccination campaign which at the end of two weeks, led to nearly two million children vaccinated against measles, meningitis, and yellow fever.²⁹⁰

The CNR had become mostly successful in their social mobilization efforts but fell short of this success with most unions. Labor unions were well established before the CNR takeover and often aligned with previous parties, making them highly politicized.²⁹¹ CDRs tried to win the support of union workers but often failed leading to significant clashes, sometimes violent, between CDRs and the CNR with unions.²⁹² Even though the CNR claimed progressive or “Marxist” ideals, their repression of many unions tended to contrast this.

²⁸⁵ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 77.

²⁸⁶ Pierre Englebert. *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 1.

²⁸⁷ Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 1.

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 1.

²⁸⁹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 88.

²⁹⁰ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 88.

²⁹¹ Ibid, 92.

²⁹² Ibid, 94.

5.8.4 FACTIONALISM IN THE CNR

Following the footsteps of political parties before them, the CNR faced significant factionalism and persistent problems. The CDRs were often at the forefront of these issues as critics saw these committees as repressive and totalitarian, especially in rural areas.²⁹³ Many members of the CDRs were accused of corrupt activities such as embezzlement and stealing.²⁹⁴ The process of so many state reforms at such fast speeds also led to fatigue amongst many CDR participants.²⁹⁵ From a leadership perspective, the CNR was divided between conservative and liberal ideas of control. Those who supported a more authoritarian punishment against political opponents started to align more with Blaise Compaoré who held the second highest rank.²⁹⁶ As tensions continued to grow, Compaoré visited Paris often throughout 1986 and Sankara to Libya, depicting a need for external support for each individual's future agenda.²⁹⁷ Côte d'Ivoire's président, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was seen as a crucial ally to Compaoré and most likely involved in the decision to oust Sankara.²⁹⁸ Sankara's impact on Burkina Faso was unlike anything the country had seen before and because of that, "The scholarly literature falls into two different camps: one camp suggests that Burkinabe society was unable to adapt to Sankara's radical policies, hence, leading to chaos in the nation's capital; the other camp suggests that the revolution was making progress and that foreign governments intervened with the democratic revolution."²⁹⁹

5.8.5 A COUP TO END THE "REVOLUTION"

²⁹³ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 95.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 96.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 99.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 100.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 104.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Vincent Gutierrez. 2018. "Understanding Geopolitics from a Historical Perspective: The Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983-1987". The Toro Historical Review 5 (1). <https://journals.calstate.edu/tthr/article/view/2704>.

Compaoré, by October 1987, held significant support from the armed forces. Gunshots were heard on October 15th outside the parliament while Sankara was in a meeting. The armed men soon entered his meeting room dressed in military uniform, opening fire on everyone in the room and killing Sankara.³⁰⁰ The assailants also suppressed any resistance within the military from Sankara loyalists, executing many.³⁰¹ The government was dissolved and the new “Popular Front” headed by Compaoré took over Burkina Faso.³⁰²

5.9 THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

The new Popular Front brought confusion amongst Burkinabè due to the number of previous CNR members in the party.³⁰³ The previous CDRs were dissolved and replaced with Revolutionary Committees (CRs) which functioned more as a top-down system to train future state functionaries.³⁰⁴ The Popular Front struggled to receive support from the population but was able to gain support from trade unions due to their grievances with the CNR.³⁰⁵ The first congress was held in March 1990, over two years after the coup, and over 3,000 delegates participated from political parties, NGOs, and CRs.³⁰⁶ A constitutional commission was created to draft a “democratic” constitution.³⁰⁷ The newly drafted constitution called for a multi-party system with elections for the National Assembly and the president along with the Prime Minister being appointed by the head of the state.³⁰⁸ The constitution also recognized social and individual rights for all Burkinabè, aligning with the democratization wave that was taking place across Africa

³⁰⁰ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 106.

³⁰¹ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 106.

³⁰² Ibid, 106.

³⁰³ Ibid, 108.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 109.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 108.

³⁰⁶ Pierre Englebert. *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 65.

³⁰⁷ Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 65.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 65.

and much of the world following the end of the Cold War.³⁰⁹ The new constitution was passed by referendum on June 2, 1991.³¹⁰ Passing with substantial support, nearly 93% approval, it should still be noted that 51% of registered voters did not participate, potentially due to the beginning of agriculture season in rural Burkina Faso.³¹¹ Legislative and presidential elections were scheduled for December 1991 and January 1992 with Compaoré intending to run for president.³¹² The upcoming elections would soon show the flaws in the new “democratic” Burkina Faso.

Compaoré rejected calls for a national conference that would provide oversight to ensure free and fair elections, angering most of the parties.³¹³ Opposition parties began aligning with one another and public demonstrations took place, often suppressed violently by riot police and government supporters.³¹⁴ Although the opposition worked together to demand a national conference, they could not agree on a presidential candidate, making Compaoré the sole contender.³¹⁵ Compaoré won the election on December 1, 1991, with an 86% approval rate and a nearly 75% abstention rate, a record high.³¹⁶ The presidential election’s legitimacy was tainted domestically and internationally. The following legislative elections, now rescheduled for May 1992, were defined by political violence as opposition leaders and figures were attacked and assassinated.³¹⁷ 43% of the registered parties contested the elections and nearly 65% of the registered voters abstained.³¹⁸ Compaoré appointed Youssouf Ouédraogo as prime minister and

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 66.

³¹⁰ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 117.

³¹¹ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 66.

³¹² Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 66-67

³¹³ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 119.

³¹⁴ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 119.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 119.

³¹⁶ Pierre Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*. Routledge, 1998, 68.

³¹⁷ Englebert, *Burkina Faso : Unsteady Statehood in West Africa*, 68.

³¹⁸ Ibid, 68.

Herman Yaméogo was appointed minister of state.³¹⁹ Ernest Harsch's analysis of the 1990 elections best described the future for Burkina Faso when he stated,

“So by the early 1990s, many elements were already in place to give the Compaoré government its durability and flexibility over the next two decades: a strong ruling party that controlled most state institutions and could dominate electoral contests, a weak and divided opposition incapable of mounting a real challenge, and when inducements and token concessions were insufficient, selective repression.”³²⁰

Burkina Faso had returned to its pre-revolutionary roots, where rule of law was virtually absent and arbitrary rule with crude power and monopolization prevailed.³²¹

5.9.1 THE FALL OF COMPAORÉ

While winning re-election in 1998, 2005, and 2010, Compaoré's new elections as a “civilian” should not be interpreted through popular support, but rather a significant repression of the opposition.³²² His presidency, like most before him, was defined by protest, corruption, and clientelism. Protests and strikes in 2011 alongside revolts in the armed forces, resulted in violent oppression.³²³ Concessions were made by the government as the situation escalated, but for many Burkinabè, this was not enough. Protests erupted again in 2014 when Compaoré attempted to amend the constitution to allow him to stay in power.³²⁴ The 2014 uprising was massive and as

³¹⁹ Ibid, 68.

³²⁰ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 122.

³²¹ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 122.

³²² Maggie Dwyer. “Situating Soldiers’ Demands: Mutinies and Protests in Burkina Faso.” *Third world quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2017): 219–234, 222.

³²³ Dwyer, “Situating Soldiers’ Demands: Mutinies and Protests in Burkina Faso,” 222.

³²⁴ Abdoulie Sawo. “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015.” *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 13.

protestors marched towards the presidential palace calling for Compaoré's resignation, they were met with bullets from the military, more specifically the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP).³²⁵ Compaoré was being forced to resign, but the details of his resignation confused the nation as he declared a national "state of siege" to be headed by army chief of staff, General Honoré Nabéré Traoré, only to later withdraw the state of siege statement.³²⁶ Furthermore, General Honoré Nabéré Traoré announced his separate proclamation which dissolved the government, implying another military coup.³²⁷

5.10 ANOTHER COUP OF CONFUSION

Traoré announced himself as the interim head of state following Compaoré's flee to Côte d'Ivoire on October 31st, 2014.³²⁸ Demonstrators did not approve of Traoré's announced role and Yacouba Isaac Zida, deputy commander of the RSP, was announced as the interim head of state on November 1st.³²⁹ A Charter of Transition was created which detailed for an electoral college to choose a civilian president who could then name a prime minister to organize a cabinet.³³⁰ The charter also stated that transition officials could not run in the presidential and legislative elections.³³¹ The council soon chose Michel Kafando, a former diplomat, as the transitional president and he was sworn in on November 18, 2014.³³² The transition from Compaoré to the new transitional civilian rule under Kafando stood in stark contrast to previous government transitions. Even with this difference, military involvement in politics did not disappear as Zida

³²⁵ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 207.

³²⁶ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 207.

³²⁷ Ibid, 207.

³²⁸ Ibid, 209.

³²⁹ Ibid, 212.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid, 213.

was soon appointed prime minister.³³³ Continuing the similarities, protests and strikes continued to dominate during the transitional rule and while the government remained weak, elections were scheduled for October 2015.³³⁴ The military also faced reform during this time and created a new armed forces code which worked to reform previous grievances from the military as well as requiring members of the military to reign if they wished to join Burkinabè politics.³³⁵ Many members of Compaoré's government were not satisfied with changes being made in the transitional government, specifically those that excluded military and previous party members. This resulted in a coup led by Gilbert Diendéré, head of the RSP under Compaoré, on September 16, 2015.³³⁶

5.11 THE FIRST FAILED COUP IN BURKINA FASO

Diendéré dismantled the government and named himself the president of the new military junta ruling Burkina Faso. The coup caused widespread domestic mobilization against the takeover and received international condemnation from the African Union, the U.S., and France who threatened to cut aid if the transitional government was not restored.³³⁷ Coupled with the rising resistance and international pressure, Diendéré was forced to cede power back to Kafando officially on September 24th, marking the only failed coup in Burkina Faso.³³⁸ October elections were eventually postponed to November and Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected president,

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid, 215.

³³⁵ Ibid, 216.

³³⁶ Abdoulie Sawo. "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015." *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 13.

³³⁷ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 218.

³³⁸ Abdoulie Sawo. "The Chronology of Military Coup D'états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015." *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 14.

sworn in officially on December 29, 2015.³³⁹ Kabore's connections to Compaoré and the CDP were still of concern for many Burkinabè but relief was felt for many as a truly democratically elected president now governed Burkina Faso.³⁴⁰ Even with this relief, voters were still reminded of their previous governments as clientelism became a large aspect of the legislative elections.³⁴¹

A new threat to Burkina Faso was emerging, terrorist attacks inside Burkina Faso's borders were increasing, and terrorist groups were forming within, marking a new form of insecurity.

5.12 COUP-PROOFING

When looking at Burkina Faso's coup-proofing strategies, or lack of in this case, it is important to distinguish between coups carried out by combat officers and those carried out by elite officers. An *elite officer coup* is defined as "any successful or unsuccessful coup carried out by a country's military leadership, comprising Chief of Staff members, officers in command councils, and commanders of a military's functional units (army, air force, navy)."³⁴² In Burkina Faso, one can define the Compaoré coup as an elite officer coup due to his rank and position of authority when the coup was committed. A *combat officer coup* is defined as "any successful and unsuccessful coup plotted by mid- and lower-ranking officers; plotters in the latter category may include individual higher- ranking officers—such as officers in the rank of general or major—who are not members of the military leadership."³⁴³ Coups of this nature are less common in Burkina Faso. Combat-officer versus elite-officer coups require different

³³⁹ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 225.

³⁴⁰ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 225.

³⁴¹ Ibid, 225.

³⁴² Holger Albrecht and Ferdinand Eibl. "How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups." *International studies quarterly* (2018), 316.

³⁴³ Albrecht and Eibl, "How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups," 316.

coup-proofing strategies as different motivations result in these, in the case of Burkina Faso where military coups are generally elite-officer coups, coup-proofing must take this into account.

5.12.1 TRADITIONAL COUP-PROOFING

Coup-proofing refers to “strategies aimed at reducing the ability or the incentives of elites to stage a coup.”³⁴⁴ These measures have historically included; the establishment of parallel security apparatuses in the form of counterbalancing, frequent rotation of officers from assigned posts, reorganization of the armed forces, “ethnic stacking” of leadership positions with those that have the same ethnicity of power holders, and institutionalization of political succession.³⁴⁵ Albercht and Eibl (2018) systematically test different coup-proofing theories, distinguishing between the type of coup and agents of a coup. The authors further find that political liberalization decreases the likelihood of a combat officer coup, but will increase an elite officer coup.³⁴⁶ This is often due to elite officers wanting to restore their power which they may have held in a previous regime. Looking at the October 1987 coup, the ongoing political liberalization became a dividing issue in the CNR as opposing ideas of authority clashed, resulting in a more conservative faction wanting to restore their traditional ways of control and an elite officer coup executed. Furthermore, they discover that counterbalancing the military shows an effective way to avoid elite-officer coups and higher military spending reduces the risk of elite-officer coups.³⁴⁷ Generally, many militaries will not engage in coup behavior but not because they do not have a desire to take power, rather because the state has put coup-proofing strategies into place that do not allow for a successful coup attempt.³⁴⁸ Coups are created on a timeline essentially, beginning

³⁴⁴ Ibid, 316.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 326.

³⁴⁷ Ibid, 326.

³⁴⁸ Aaron Belkin and Evan Schofer. “Toward a Structural Understanding of Coup Risk.” *The Journal of conflict resolution* 47, no. 5 (2003): 594–620.

with plots, moving to the eventual attempt, and then the potential successful seizure, therefore a state's ability to successfully stop a coup requires coup-proofing strategies that target not just the execution of a coup, but the plotting stage as well.

5.12.2 COUP DETERRENTS AS A FORM OF COUP-PROOFING

Coup-proofing strategies do not come from the state solely. Since the end of colonization, international agencies, organizations, and economic coalitions have established standards that they place on other nations, especially those in need of financial or humanitarian assistance. Many of these standards are contingent on a democratic process in a state and coups are inherently the least democratic of processes. This can result in the expulsion from international organizations, pauses in aid allocation, and at the more extreme end of the spectrum, military intervention. For Burkina Faso, their membership in the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and their reliance on foreign aid could be used as a deterrent to conspirators considering a seizure of power but unfortunately, this is not executed to the extent it could. In terms of the African Union, membership suspension is not seen as a significant punishment due to the lack of tangible economic or security benefits provided to states.³⁴⁹ Therefore military leaders who recently came into power through a coup have no real incentive to hand power back to civilian control, this is also the case for Burkina Faso and their ECOWAS membership. The 2015 failed coup in Burkina Faso can be seen as a success story for the power of international condemnation as pressure from the U.S., the African Union, and ECOWAS, coupled with the massive domestic demonstrations, assisted in the reinstatement of transitional president Kafando.³⁵⁰ The impact of this international pressure can not be understood

³⁴⁹ Naunihal Singh . “The Myth of the Coup Contagion.” *Journal of democracy* 33, no. 4 (2022): 74–88.

³⁵⁰ Abdoulie Sawo. “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015.” *Milletlerarasi munasebetler Turk yilligi* 48, no. 48 (2017): 1–18, 13.

as the sole reason for the coup's failure though, threats of suspension of membership and aid were seen as challenges to the military junta, but the domestic situation proved to be the strongest factor, causing ECOWAS to assist in negotiations.³⁵¹ As for foreign financial assistance, countries like the United States, which condemns coups, do not often reduce aid allocation. The United States disbursed \$160 million to Burkina Faso in 2020 and \$180 million in 2021.³⁵² Following the coups in 2022, \$230 million went to Burkina Faso, and \$200 million since November 2023, an increase from the period of civilian control.³⁵³ It should be noted that aid to Burkina Faso is mostly in the form of humanitarian assistance and the recent crisis in the Sahel has increased the need for humanitarian assistance, along with the insecurity created by the coups, which can explain the increase in financial aid.

5.13 CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN BURKINA FASO

Civil-military relations in Burkina Faso can be seen as unique due to the heavy involvement of the military in politics since its independence. This “blurring” of civil-military relations enables corruption, the politicization of army personnel, and military fragmentation which results in counter-coups.³⁵⁴

5.13.1 MUTINY IN BURKINA FASO

While one can see a pattern of protests and strikes within Burkina Faso to gain political or social goals, there is also a form of this within the armed forces. This is referred to as a *mutiny* which can be defined as, “an act of collective insubordination for goals other than political power

³⁵¹ Sawo, “The Chronology of Military Coup D’états and Regimes in Burkina Faso: 1980-2015,” 13.

³⁵² “Foreign Assistance.Gov,” FA.gov, accessed August 7, 2023, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/>.

³⁵³ “Foreign Assistance.Gov,” FA.gov, accessed August 7, 2023, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/>.

³⁵⁴ Samuel Decalo. “Military Coups and Military Regimes in Africa.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 11, no. 1 (1973): 105–127, 120.

... involve mostly rank-and-file soldiers expressing their grievances to senior hierarchy or political leadership.”³⁵⁵ Mutinies in the military have also occurred in parallel to protests in Burkina Faso, often making each other's movements stronger due to the increased weight the government feels when civilians and the military are both taking collective action. A significant amount of mutinies happened during Compaoré’s rule and more major revolts happened in 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007, and 2011.³⁵⁶ In Maggie Dwyer’s interviews with members of Burkina Faso’s military in 2012 over the 2011 revolts, the researcher found that many of the mutinies were a result of corruption and favoritism within the armed forces.³⁵⁷ Much of the favoritism, as described by the soldiers, comes in the recruitment process when those of higher military rank can make exceptions in testing and basic training to children of wealthy families or relatives of superior officers.³⁵⁸ What these mutinies brought to light is that many of the systems and the overall organization of the military need reform in the same way that civilians have called out institutions that require reform, displaying a form of mutuality between civilians and military personnel.

While grievances between the government and the military have resulted in mutiny and revolt, these have typically occurred with non-leadership personnel in the armed forces. What appears to be the major shift in how action is taken against grievances comes through rank. When the interests of the army are threatened, affecting all levels of rank, military leadership has historically found itself abandoning the civilian population and illegally seizing power through a coup. Once the military seizes power in Burkina Faso, they continue the pattern of clientelism and corruption that their predecessors practiced, even though they often cite those issues as their

³⁵⁵ Maggie Dwyer. “Situating Soldiers’ Demands: Mutinies and Protests in Burkina Faso.” *Third world quarterly* 38, no. 1 (2017): 219–234, 221.

³⁵⁶ Dwyer, “Situating Soldiers’ Demands: Mutinies and Protests in Burkina Faso,” 223.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 226-27.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 227.

justification for taking control. Now the state is in a situation where it is not only a victim to corruption, but military factionalism which could result in another coup. Moreover, while military regimes are five times more likely to suffer from a coup than civilian-led governments, they are also four times more likely to succeed.³⁵⁹ This makes Burkina Faso's continued pattern of military governments exponentially more at risk for a coup and its eventual success.

5.13.2 CLIENTELISM AND MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

Burkina Faso's military may appear less powerful compared to other African armies, but within the nation, they are the most powerful political force. Their power enables them to intervene in politics and the nation's export dependence on raw minerals, which are easier to control and seize, further supports the military's intervention.³⁶⁰ Clientelism during military governance can be seen in the January 2022 coup, when Damiba deposed Kaboré, the new military junta cited the government's inability to deal with the ongoing security threat, but also discussed the social and economic issues the state was facing.³⁶¹ Directly after the coup, military leaders met with the mining chamber (Chambre des mines) and guaranteed the private mining companies that they could continue their work without restriction, even though the state borders were closed, this would not apply to them.³⁶² In Burkina Faso, "20% of the mining royalties collected by the state and 1% of mining company revenues go into a state-managed Local Development Mining Fund (FMDL) that finances development projects in mining communities

³⁵⁹ Jonathan Powell. "Determinants of the Attempting and Outcome of Coups D'état." *The Journal of conflict resolution* 56, no. 6 (2012): 1017–1040, 1035.

³⁶⁰ Augustine J. Kposowa and Craig Jenkins. "The Structural Sources of Military Coups in Postcolonial Africa, 1957-1984." *The American journal of sociology* 99, no. 1 (1993): 126–163, 147.

³⁶¹ Bettina Engels. "Transition Now? Another Coup D'état in Burkina Faso." *Review of African political economy* 49, no. 172 (2022): 315–326.

³⁶² "Burkina Faso : Coup Leader Damiba Reassures Endeavour's Local Head over Gold Mines ," *Africa Intelligence*, January 31, 2022, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/west-africa/2022/01/31/coup-leader-damiba-reassures-endeavour-s-local-head-over-gold-mines,109730265-bre>.

and elsewhere.”³⁶³ Mining accounts for around 14% of Burkina Faso’s state revenue,³⁶⁴ and in 2021, nearly \$4 billion worth of gold was exported.³⁶⁵ This makes gold extremely important to the government in power as these funds can be used to support the state or those in power. Furthermore, according to ICMC’s Mining Contribution Index which calculates the significance of the mining sector’s contribution to national economies in 2020, Burkina Faso ranked number one, further displaying their reliance on gold.³⁶⁶ Gold is also considered an important asset to purchase foreign currency for the state’s reserves which in turn helps hold value for the national currency and the general economy. Military leader Ibrahim Traore “commandeered” 200kg (valued at approximately USD 11.8 million)³⁶⁷ of gold from Endeavour Mining’s Mana mine in February 2023, for undisclosed public necessity which is allowed due to stipulation in Burkina Faso’s mining code.³⁶⁸ The acquisition of gold raises concerns regarding the state’s ability to finance its institutions and security projects, potentially due to sanctions created following the coups in 2022.

5.13.3 VOLUNTEER FORCES

The military operates traditionally with career soldiers but has also included a form of voluntary forces at different periods. The first of these was the Committees for the Defense of the

³⁶³ Anne Mimault and Helen Reid, “Burkina Faso’s Vanishing Gold Boom Puts Livelihoods at Risk,” Reuters, November 28, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/burkina-fasos-vanishing-gold-boom-puts-livelihoods-risk-2022-11-28/>.

³⁶⁴ Agence France Presse, “Construction of First Gold Refinery Begins in Burkina Faso,” Barron’s, November 23, 2023, <https://www.barrons.com/news/construction-of-first-gold-refinery-begins-in-burkina-faso-cd8de771>.

³⁶⁵ “Burkina Faso Trade,” WITS, accessed August 4, 2023, <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/BFA/textview>.

³⁶⁶ “Mining Contribution Index 6th Edition,” ICMC, December 2022, https://www.icmm.com/website/publications/pdfs/social-performance/2022/research_mci-6-ed.pdf?cb=16134.

³⁶⁷ Calculated by using international gold value in February 2023 of approximately \$USD 59,000 per kilo and multiplying by 200.

³⁶⁸ “Burkina Faso Buys 200 Kg of Gold from Endeavour’s Mana Mine,” Reuters, February 16, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/burkina-faso-buys-200-kg-gold-endeavours-mana-mine-2023-02-15/>.

Revolution (CDRs), created by Sankara as a platform for popular mobilization,³⁶⁹ were trained in basic military skills that could be used as a reserve in the case of war.³⁷⁰ The CNR saw a significant need for altering the civil-military relations and large military reform came through the training of women in the military.³⁷¹ Furthermore, officers were tasked with growing food, digging wells, building public structures, etc. where they were based to alter the image of the armed forces in the public eye; these contributions can be seen in the UNICEF report on self-imposed structural adjustment.³⁷² While these efforts were made to “humble” the military in comparison to ordinary Burkinabè, soldiers still understood their positions of power, sometimes resulting in abuses of such power.³⁷³ The Agacher Strip War of 1985 displayed the security benefit that CDRs provided Burkina Faso when they were able to assist in operations successfully.³⁷⁴

CHAPTER VI - DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Burkina Faso’s struggle with military coups is not entirely unique as many states have faced coups in their history. What is clear though, is that Burkina Faso has an unprecedented amount of military coups which have also resulted in a successful seizure of the state. Understanding *why* Burkina Faso has such a high success rate involved a significant historical analysis of each coup and the events that preceded it. The argument for this thesis is that the lack

³⁶⁹ Daniel Miles McFarland and Lawrence Rupley, *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1998), lix.

³⁷⁰ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 65.

³⁷¹ Harsh, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution*, 65.

³⁷² Ibid, 65.

³⁷³ Ibid, 66.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

of state institutions, a problem rooted in the colonial origins of the state, has plagued the stability of Burkina Faso since independence. This has resulted in a lack of coup-proofing and positive civil-military relations which contributes to the continued cycle of military coup success, further destabilizing the country.

6.2 THE COLONIAL IMPACT

In academia, one finds it hard to place significant “blame” on colonial rule for current state issues at this point in modern history. Some may see colonial rule as a distant past, one that does not currently have an impact on the state. On the contrary, when looking at Burkina Faso, nearly 60 years of colonial rule, and now in 2023, only 63 years of independence, the state is still in its infancy compared to much of the world. This is the case for many African nations. Chapter two discussed Tilly’s central paradox of European state formation and how nations were able to develop institutions during war due to a mutually beneficial relationship between government and military and the civilian population.³⁷⁵ European states, and some East Asian states, were founded through a sense of nationalism which allowed this evolution to become successful. This process took centuries and states were developing side by side as they interacted in war, trade, and diplomacy. When Burkina Faso began falling under colonial rule in the 1890s, European nationalism was at its peak, and the desire of European states to solidify their status through wealth and resources accumulated in the colonial conquests. Burkina Faso, at this time, held its own government structures within different ethnic groups that had developed uniquely to their interactions with the rest of the continent, also through trade, war, and diplomacy. France’s conquest of the territory intentionally destroyed these systems in favor of their own system, one that was developed in an entirely different environment and history. This system, oppressive in

³⁷⁵ Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States* (Malden/Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), chapter 3.

nature, stood in stark contrast with the structures in place, or for some regions, lack of structures. Moreover, European ideas of nationalism and individual rights contrasted with African ideas of tribalism and group rights. Following independence, the colonially inherited structures, marked by corruption and favoritism, were supposed to lead the state to “modernity”. Instead, these institutions continued to fail, and the new nation, defined by its imposed arbitrary borders, was supposed to form its nationalism without the autonomy and freedom European states formed theirs. Burkina Faso, and other colonized nations, had been picked off their timelines of state formation, forced to participate in a different system without sovereignty, and then placed back on this “timeline”, regaining sovereignty and expected to participate in an institutionalized global system as if they always held effective and fair institutions.

Burkina Faso’s ability to develop new and effective institutions was affected by a variety of factors. The state was considered naturally weak following independence and even though Burkina Faso did not have to participate in a violent independence war, it did not possess the resources needed to become a strong state, economically and politically. What Burkina Faso did have was a strong civil society which has been slowly developing, but remained a powerful force. Labor unions and students have proved to be effective in collectivized action, often using strikes or protests to demand political change. While these groups are strong, they have not proven strong enough to institute changes that hold, instead, they remain divided on key political issues after they obtain the initial role they agree on. Their weakness comes in consensus, opening the door for other strong forces to fill that gap, more specifically, the military. Every coup in Burkina Faso has taken place during political unrest, typically unfolding during active protests and strikes against the government. The military can benefit from the weak institutions and state instability, essentially “hijacking” the civilian population's various political movements

and using it as justification for their seizure of power. Sometimes these coups are considered welcomed by the majority population, like Staff Lt. Colonel Sangoulé Lamizana's coup to oust Maurice Yaméogo, but they often result in discontent with the new military rule or government. A pattern that shows in the explanation for this is the continued outlawing of political parties and assemblies. Nearly every government has made collective action illegal at some point in their rule and political parties are disbanded and restarted continuously. Often political parties do not even last ten years and often fall when a government falls. The population jumps between these new and disbanded parties with every new election because they have no other way to engage with politics which further creates political instability.

A lack of consistent and stable political parties results in a lack of solidified government agendas for the future. Political parties and their agendas are at the center of how the government develops policy and institutions. If a nation does not see a political movement consistently, that is there is no plan for the future of the nation or consistent ideology, there is nothing to build institutions from. In Burkina Faso, the consistent rotation of political parties and their agendas have left the nation without an outlook for the nation. When Maurice Yaméogo took office as the first president of Burkina Faso, there was no real agenda from his party or his government for what the newly independent Burkina Faso would be, instead, he continued to rule like the French.³⁷⁶ This essentially set the stage for the future of politics in Burkina Faso. Even after Yaméogo was deposed from office and new governments took control promising institutional change it was never significant enough, and often reverted to the initial practices of corruption and clientelism. Furthermore, the largest scale of institutional change came under Sankara, but following his removal, the state abandoned the new institutions. The lack of institutions, or more specifically effective institutions, whether those be economic, social, or political, has contributed

³⁷⁶ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 42.

to the ease with which coups can take place. Moreover, as coups continue in the nation and new military governments come to power, there is no incentive to place checks and balances on the military in the form of coup-proofing, allowing this cycle to continue.

6.3 LACK OF COUP-PROOFING AS A RESULT OF INSTITUTIONAL WEAKNESS

Coup-proofing is a process that takes place to reduce the ability of the military to stage a coup. As discussed in the data and findings chapter, coups in Burkina Faso are typically committed by elite officers which changes the methods of coup-proofing needed for the nation. The extensive historical research that took place for this thesis through analyzing significant compilations of Burkina Faso's history, there has been no clear evidence of coup-proofing strategies taking place through government policy or institutions. During Sankara's time in office, there were minor reforms in the military but these reforms had no impact on the ability of the military to take control. The increase in military spending during this time goes directly against the coup-proofing theory that proves increased military spending will increase the likelihood of an elite-officer coup, which eventually does occur.³⁷⁷ Furthermore, the only form of "coup-proofing" that takes place in Burkina Faso, and it needs to be noted that the use of the word "coup-proofing" here is generous to the situation, was the execution and imprisonment of officers who supported different military factions and governments. While this is not a traditional or academically researched form of coup-proofing, it was used as a tool in different military regimes in Burkina Faso to stop any resistance movements from military members who did not support the new regime.³⁷⁸ The lack of coup-proofing in Burkina Faso can be connected to the lack of strong judicial or government institutions but also the number of military governments.

³⁷⁷ Albrecht, Holger, and Ferdinand Eibl. "How to Keep Officers in the Barracks: Causes, Agents, and Types of Military Coups." *International studies quarterly* (2018), 327.

³⁷⁸ Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 121.

The military has not proven to be an effective or even powerful ruler in Burkina Faso. Their lack of knowledge on how to govern a nation is clear when looking at the historical economic and social development of the nation, proving that they can not run a country more effectively than a civilian-led government. Their inability to institute functional policy is clear, but what also comes with this inability, is the lack of coup-proofing measures ever instituted. There is no clear reasoning for this that appears in the research completed therefore the rationality behind this can only be assumed. What is clear though, is that the continued lack of coup-proofing contributes to the cycle of military coups in Burkina Faso which are not only staged but successful in seizure.

6.4 CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: A SPECTRUM

Civil-military relations in Burkina Faso have operated on a spectrum as both the civilian and military populations have colluded and contrasted with one another for decades. Burkina Faso is supposed to operate as a democracy, one in which decision-making power lies in the hands of the civilian population. As the military continues to be involved in Burkina Faso politics, there is no clear relationship. The purpose of the military is to defend the nation, it was created as an institution that protects from outside forces, instead, the military defines Burkina Faso and the institution that was once supposed to protect is now the one Burkinabè fears.³⁷⁹ Furthermore, the military in Burkina Faso had consistently been called to “maintain order” during protests and opposition movements. This further blurs the lines of what a healthy civil-military relationship looks like, the military is supposed to operate as “guardians” of the population and when placed in this role, they become the oppressor.³⁸⁰ When the military in Burkina Faso is perpetually placed in the role of law enforcement, the military is now in

³⁷⁹ Richard H. Kohn, “How Democracies Control the Military.” *Journal of democracy* 8, no. 4 (1997): 140–153, 142.

³⁸⁰ Kohn, “How Democracies Control the Military,” 144-45, 142.

opposition to the people, further alienating both sides and reducing confidence and trust in one another, undermining any form of civilian control.³⁸¹ The Burkinabè military finds themselves in this role in nearly every government and regime, consistently fatiguing the lack of trust that already exists between the military and the civilian population.

An explanation for the role of the military in internal order issues is the lack of real external threats at the time of independence. While Burkina Faso faces external threats today from violent insurgency groups, at the time of independence, Burkina Faso was not engaging in an independence war or a border war over territory. The need for the military to protect the nation from external threats did not exist. Instead, the lack of resources in the nation, largely due to the state's economic position, meant that the military was seen as an alternative to investing in a strong police force. This further connects back to French colonial rule in Burkina Faso as the French military was seen as the main custodian of internal order, often used to suppress any uprisings or opposition to colonial rule. The military in Burkina Faso has consistently been alienated from the civilian population, while it should not be used to defend their actions, the military has had few opportunities to integrate into Burkinabè society, further creating negative civil-military relations. Thomas Sankara understood how this alienation was affecting that nation which is why he tasked the military with public improvement projects.³⁸² While this did result in public improvement and potentially improved perceptions of the military, the historical position of power still tainted the reform efforts.

6.4.1 A MODERN PRAETORIAN STATE

³⁸¹ Ibid, 145.

³⁸² Ernest Harsch, *Burkina Faso: A History of Power, Protest, and Revolution* (Zed Books, 2017), 65.

This thesis finds that based on the cycle of military coups in Burkina Faso and the negative civil-military relations, Burkina Faso operates as a modern praetorian state. A modern praetorian state is “one in which the military tends to intervene and potentially could dominate the political system,” this results from the lack of legitimacy in civilian institutions which allow the military to control the military system.³⁸³ The political and social conditions that lead to a praetorian state such as; low level of political institutionalization, a lack of sustained support for political structures, weak and ineffective political parties, fragmented labor unions, and a lack of national ideology, all exist in Burkina Faso historically and presently, resulting in military domination of the political system.³⁸⁴

CHAPTER VII - CONCLUSION

Ten coups in 63 years of independence, nine of which are successful, Burkina Faso has yet to see consistent stability, politically and economically. What does this say about the state? What does this say about the population? What is the root of this issue? These are just a few of the questions that ran through my mind before beginning this research. Furthermore, what is the importance of these questions, which ones play more of a role in the cycle of coups? How do these variables weigh in the outcome of success? This thesis examined the *why* behind the coup

³⁸³Amos Perlmutter, “The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Polities.” *Comparative politics* 1, no. 3 (1969): 382–404, 383.

³⁸⁴ Perlmutter, “The Praetorian State and the Praetorian Army: Toward a Taxonomy of Civil-Military Relations in Developing Polities,” 384-389.

success rate in Burkina Faso and determined institutional weakness, lack of coup-proofing, and negative civil-military relations as the variables that have the largest impact on the remarkably high success rate of military coups in Burkina Faso.

The method of historical process tracing brought me to these variables as I examined the history of Burkina Faso in detail, paired with a variety of theories trying to explain coups, institutional weakness, lack of coup-proofing, and negative civil-military relations continued to stand out as core issues. After these variables were identified, the new question of how they fit in this so-called equation of success became the new task. The data clearly showed that prior to every coup in Burkina Faso, different forms of state instability were taking place, whether that was in the form of protest or violent insurgency, state instability was present and necessary for the military to execute a coup. State instability was not enough to explain the success though which is why the variables described were the key to understanding Burkina Faso's military success. The argument for this thesis is that the lack of state institutions, a problem rooted in the colonial origins of the state, has plagued the stability of Burkina Faso since independence. This has resulted in a lack of coup-proofing and positive civil-military relations which contributes to the continued cycle of military coup success, further destabilizing the country. It is also the argument in this thesis that Burkina Faso operates as a modern praetorian state, this is a result of the above cycle.

The purpose of this theory has been theory-building, applying the significance of Burkina Faso's coup success, to a further understanding of how coups gain success. The variables identified in this thesis can then be further explored in the context of other West African states that fell under colonial rule and also fall victim to frequent coups such as Niger and Mali. As explained in the discussion, the hesitancy in academia to name the reasoning behind an issue as

colonialism appears to have limited the importance of these variables' origins. This thesis aspires to motivate academia to look further at a state's colonial origins not necessarily as an explanation of an issue but as an explanation of variables that contribute to an issue. This further understanding of specific variables will allow for a deeper understanding of the processes at play that are causing a result, in this case, a successful coup. Furthermore, the determined variables in this thesis and their origin can impact future coup-proofing methods and theories, which can in turn benefit Burkina Faso if applied.

In conclusion, Burkina Faso's tumultuous history of military coups and their unprecedented success rates can be attributed to a complex interplay of historical, institutional, and socio-political factors. The legacy of colonial rule, which disrupted indigenous governance structures and imposed foreign systems, set the stage for a struggle to define a national identity and establish stable institutions. The abrupt insertion of Burkina Faso into a global system without the organic development of effective institutions further exacerbated the nation's vulnerability to internal conflicts and military intervention.

The lack of consistent and stable political parties, rooted in a colonial legacy of corruption and favoritism, has hindered the development of a clear national agenda and solidified government policies. This institutional weakness, combined with a strong civil society that lacks consensus, creates a power vacuum that the military often exploits during periods of political unrest. The military, in a pattern that has persisted throughout Burkina Faso's history, capitalizes on the weaknesses in state institutions and utilizes the pretext of popular discontent to justify its seizure of power.

Burkina Faso has the potential to become a functioning democratic state and their robust civil society is a testament to this. Addressing institutional weakness, not to be looked at as an

easy task as it is an extremely difficult process, could bring significant progress to the nation. Effective institutions have the potential to build coup-proofing measures and positive civil-military relations, all of which affect the stability of the country. Further research on these final remarks should look at nations that have developed institutions in recent decades, specifically any African nations, and how those processes could be applied to Burkina Faso to bring the nation the stability it deserves.

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