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BURKINA FASO CONFLICT INSIGHT

ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and recommendations to national, regional and continental decision makers in the implementation of peace and security-related instruments.

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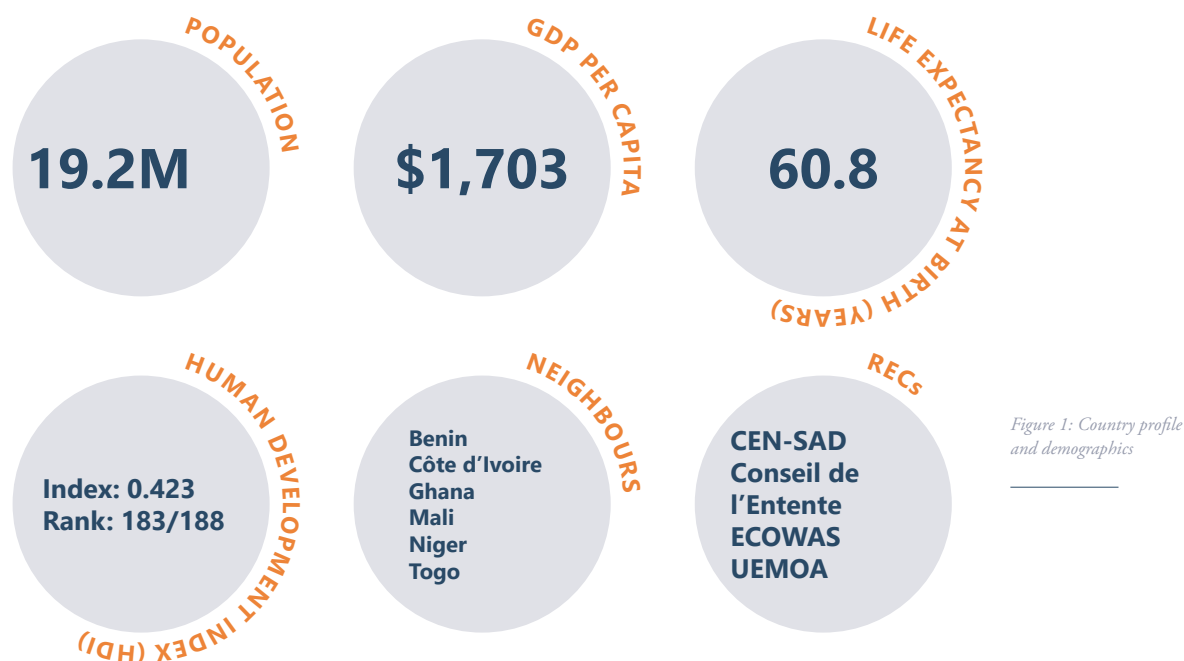
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SITUATION ANALYSIS



Considered as a model of stability for at least two decades in a region destabilised by crises (Liberia and Sierra Leone from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, Côte d'Ivoire 2002–2011 and Mali since 2012), Burkina Faso was shaken in 2014 by popular protests that overthrew the 27-year rule of President Blaise Compaoré. In the aftermath of the 2014 historic demonstrations, a civil-military transition government was appointed to stabilise the country and return it to constitutional order.¹ However, in September 2015, the Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle (RSP), loyal to Blaise Compaoré, staged a coup d'état against the transition government.² In that context, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), pressured by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), were prompted to intervene and restore the transitional government. Elections were subsequently organised and President Marc Roch Kaboré (former Prime Minister of President Blaise Compaoré from 1994 until 1996 and President of the Parliament from 2002 until 2012) was elected in November 2015.³

¹ *Le Monde Afrique*. (2014, November 25). *Burkina Faso : un gouvernement de transition formé*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/23/un-gouvernement-de-transition-forme-au-burkina-faso_4528044_3212.html

² Olivier M. (2015, September 17). *Coup d'État au Burkina Faso : tout savoir sur le jour où le général Diendéré a pris le pouvoir*. Retrieved from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/265387/politique/coup-d-etat-burkina-faso-savoir-jour-general-diendere-a-pri-pouvoir/>

³ *BBC News Africa*. (2015, December 1). *Roch Marc Christian Kaboré elected Burkina Faso president*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34971505>

Although President Kaboré vowed to improve the livelihood of his citizenry, the economic constraints manifested by the fluctuation of prices of the country's main foreign exchange earners (gold, cotton and shea) coupled with terrorist activities since 2015 have hampered his political programme aimed principally at poverty reduction among the 19.2 million inhabitants of the country.⁴ The state is losing control over important parts of its 270,764 km² territory, especially in the northern, north-western and eastern parts.⁵ The threat is spilling over into the southern provinces including Comoe and Poni.⁶ The low income (see country profile and demographics above) of the country, the negative impacts of climate change (environmental degradation), the transnational organised crime, the flow of arms from Libya after the fall of Ghaddafi's regime and the lack of readiness of its security institutions have undermined its capacities to properly address those challenges.⁷ As a result, Burkina Faso, from a model of stability in West Africa, became a peak of instability in the region. Thus, the upcoming 2020 electoral races in Burkina Faso are to be cautiously monitored given the fragile context in the country marked by terrorist activities, proliferation of self-defence groups, growing socio-political protests and discontent among the security forces.

⁴ *International Crisis Group*. (2019, January 28). *Lutter contre les insurrections et l'instabilité au Burkina Faso*. *Crisis Watch*. Page 4.

⁵ *International Crisis Group*. (2019, January 28). *Ibid*. Page 2.

⁶ *Interview with a West Africa Sabel regional security expert*, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

⁷ *International Crisis Group*. (2019, January 28). *Ibid*. Page 4.

This report aims at analysing the threats to peace and security in Burkina Faso as well as factors that can be leveraged to restore peace in the country through national, regional and continental efforts.

CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Weak presence of state institutions outside Ouagadougou

The weak presence of state institutions in Burkina Faso is manifested by the limited and unequal distribution of state institutions outside the capital, Ouagadougou. Such institutions are scarce and the existing ones are over-stretched and unable to deliver efficient services.⁸ They are in short supply to provide effective basic social services such as health care, security, water and electricity. A number of regions remain with limited state presence and are underdeveloped having only few amenities. This led to growing anger among sections of the population.⁹ Further, the borders between Burkina Faso and Mali (Northern segment) and between Burkina Faso and Niger have been historically ill-monitored and thus provided easy access for terrorist groups ousted from countries such as Algeria and other parts of the Sahel.

The government intended to resolve the concern through a national decentralisation process aimed at giving autonomy to regions and localities, promoting local resources and allowing a better social, economic and political representation of the social fabric appropriate to their local contexts. However, the process resulted in a general failure and revived tensions between communities over land ownership.¹⁰ As a result, populations, peculiarly in the North, were frustrated due to failure to satisfy their basic needs and uneven access to political and economic opportunities and thus felt abandoned by the government.¹¹ That led to several unrests in the country which were later exploited by terrorist groups.¹² An effect of contagion spread to eastern Burkina Faso due to the similarities of issues (poor governance and weak presence of State) and the proximity with the Sahel region. The main reasons behind the failure of the decentralisation process were linked to lack of finance, absence of follow up to sustain the process and lack of political will.

⁸ Hilgers, M., & Loada, A. (2013). «Tensions et protestations dans un régime semi-autoritaire : croissance des révoltes populaires et maintien du pouvoir au Burkina Faso». Editions Karthala. Politique africaine. Pages 187-208. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-africaine-2013-3-page-187.htm>

⁹ International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North*. Africa Report N°254. Page i.

¹⁰ Hilgers, M., & Loada, A. (2013). Ibid. Page 188.

¹¹ International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). Ibid. Page i.

¹² International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). Ibid. Page i.

Lack of rule of law

Burkina Faso, in its history, has experienced six coup d'états (1966, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1987 and 2015) which have hampered its democratisation process.¹³ The coup d'état of 1987 was a significant turning point in Burkina Faso's history. It saw the assassination of Captain Thomas Sankara followed by the prolonged authoritarian rule of President Blaise Compaoré until he was forced to leave office in 2014. President Compaoré's 27-year-rule was driven by an agenda aiming to weaken political opponents and other social checks and balances.¹⁴ Several times, he acted out of the boundaries of the national laws to maintain power among the Burkinabe social fabric. During his reign, human rights abuses were committed against individuals or groups considered as threats to his power.¹⁵ The assassination of the journalist Norbert Zongo in 1998, the deaths of many in custody, the detention, intimidation, ill-treatment of political opponents and civil society leaders, and the subsequent impunity all illustrated the lack of rule of law in Burkina Faso from 1987 until 2014. As such, distrust was nurtured for years among the Burkinabe citizens, civil society, opposition parties and the state apparatus.

Economic insecurity

Burkina Faso's economy is among the poorest in the world with a low level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.¹⁶ The country's exchange earners (gold, cotton and shea) are easily affected by fluctuation of world market prices and do not generate sufficient income to sustain Burkina Faso's development although its economic growth rose by 6.8% in 2018.¹⁷ Moreover, the debt ratio (34.1% in 2016) of Burkina Faso, although it is under the general ECOWAS regional ratio (70% of the GDP), is likely to increase in 2020 due to the need to finance the state's security strategies.¹⁸ In that context, the country is expected to rely on multi-lateral and bi-lateral partners such as Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund). The inability of the state to provide adequate and sufficient economic opportunities to its entire citizenry

¹³ ESMA B. S. (2015, September 17). *Burkina Faso: 7 coups d'Etat en 54 ans d'indépendance (chronologie)*, AA Afrique. Retrieved from <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/politique/burkina-faso-7-coups-detat-en-54-ans-dindependance-chronologie/119283>

¹⁴ Hilgers, M., & Loada, A. (2013). Ibid. Page 200.

¹⁵ Amnesty International. (2000). *Amnesty International Report - Burkina Faso*. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aa1824.html>

¹⁶ See country profile and demographics page 1.

¹⁷ The World Bank. (2018). *Country overview-Burkina Faso*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burkinafaso/overview>

¹⁸ Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

by developing infrastructures (roads, dry harbours, agricultural programs) and enhancing employment to sustain the national economy would worsen as its little income would essentially serve to reimburse debts contracted from various partners. Currently, more than a half (66.8%) of the Burkinabe remain poor with low purchasing power while the cost of living is continuously increasing.¹⁹ That situation would generally result in frustrations that lead to protests and threaten state stability as indicated by the unrests of September 2018 that highlighted how economic fragility can negatively impact Burkina Faso.²⁰

Since the late 2000s, mining has become a source of conflict in Burkina Faso. At least 11 industrial mines of gold and 1 of zinc are currently exploited by foreign companies²¹ while more than 700 local artisanal mines existed as of 2014.²² The mines are generally accompanied by conflicts between local communities and artisanal miners on the one hand, and the state and industrial companies' security forces on the other.²³ Locally, communities are frequently engaged in violent clashes with artisanal miners mainly over water pollution and other issues such as degradation of fertile lands. Both groups (local communities and artisanal miners) also have conflicting relationships with the state and industrial mining companies' security forces for diverse reasons. Local communities demand efficient monitoring measures from the state to stop the miners' use of prohibited chemicals that pollute water and soils. However, the state security forces' attempts to eradicate illegal artisanal mining escalate to clashes between them and the artisanal miners.²⁴

Radicalisation and violent extremism

Radicalisation in Burkina Faso resulted in violent extremism and is mainly localised in the Sahel and in the East mostly inhabited by Muslim communities.²⁵ However, currently, the religious factors are not relevant

¹⁹ United Nations Development Program. (2018). *Ibid.* Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BFA>

²⁰ Garda World. (2018, September 30). *Burkina Faso: Thousands protest in Ouagadougou* retrieved from <https://www.garda.com/crisis:24/news-alerts/160621/burkina-faso-thousands-protest-in-ouagadougou-september-29-update-2>

²¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 25.

²² Bazillier, R., Girard, V. (2018, September 14). *Burkina Faso-boom minier : la malédiction n'est pas loin.* *Le Point.* Retrieved from https://www.lepoint.fr/economie/burkina-faso-boom-minier-la-malediction-n-est-pas-loin-14-09-2018-2251158_28.php#.

²³ Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 25.

²⁴ Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 25.

²⁵ République du Burkina Faso. (2006). *Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitation de 2006 (rgph-2006).* Monographie de la région de l'Est. Ministère de l'économie et des finances. Retrieved from <http://www.issp.bf/index.php/fr/droits-des-enfants-au-bf/2-documents-recenses/5-autres/ouvrages/399-monographie-est/file>

for a comprehensive analysis of radicalisation and violent extremism in Burkina Faso as the causes and trajectories of the phenomena vary from region to region. In northern Burkina Faso, especially in the Sahel, radicalisation and violent extremism are rooted in the frustrations of the population over underdevelopment and the established uneven social order while in the eastern part of the country, they are deeply linked to poor governance issues that also include the absence of the state which led to sentiments of injustice among the local communities. In the two areas, religious issues respectively represent 20% and 5% of the grievances.²⁶ Although foreign influences including the fall of President Gaddafi in 2011 and the spread of terrorist groups in the greater Sahel region contribute directly or indirectly to insecurity in Burkina Faso, the current situation is mainly rooted in the internal governance issues mentioned above.

The several years of state absence in eastern and northern areas of Burkina Faso has been problematic for the populations. Their regions never had a decent level of development compared to the southern regions, especially the greater regions of Ouagadougou and Bobo Dioulasso.²⁷ The uneven access to economic opportunities as well as basic services in the northern regions, especially in Soum Province, underpinned distrust between the state and the local populations.²⁸ In addition, inequalities within communities at the local level, especially the division of the Fulani community into classes (Masters) and Rimaibé (Slaves), were also contested by community members.²⁹ The 27-year-authoritarian rule of President Compaoré characterised by violent repressions of protests over governance issues could explain why such phenomena did not happen until recently. As such, following the fall of President Compaoré's regime in 2014, paths were open for violence entrepreneurs to mobilise local grievances and radicalise positions vis a vis the state and the local administrative structures. A case in point is where Ibrahim Malam Dicko mobilised social grievances among certain northern populations, especially the Fulani from Soum region where he belonged, via egalitarian rhetoric so as to gain their support and sympathy. That allowed him to take root in the Soum province and create Ansarul Islam in 2016, a local extremist group that expresses local grievances through attacks against state and local institutions although it indirectly showed its will to combat western culture.³⁰

²⁶ Interview with a country expert, December 11, 2019 via WhatsApp.

²⁷ International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page 7.

²⁸ Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 20.

²⁹ International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page i.

³⁰ International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page 5.

Absence of mitigating mechanisms for effects of climate change

In Burkina Faso, as in the whole Sahel region, climate change is manifested by a continuous environmental degradation resulting in a considerable reduction of natural resources such as pasture, fertile soil and water; and in the modification of ancestral routes of transhumance.³¹ In that context, both farmers' and herders' activities are negatively impacted by climate change. The capacities of farmers to produce maximally are reduced due to lack of fertile soil and that eventually results in decreased revenues while herders' livestock and incomes are threatened by the lack of pasture and water. In addition, the modification of the traditional routes of transhumance due to climate change and conflict over land distribution and ownership is fuelling clashes between the two communities.³² The state-advantaged farmers in the redistribution of lands as in Burkina Faso agriculture have always been the main providers of state's incomes.³³ Hence, herders, felt biased by the state to the advantage of the farmers, have been continuously claiming the ownership of their lands (including routes and pastures) unfairly despoiled by the state.³⁴

³¹ Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 7.

³² Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 8.

³³ Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 21.

³⁴ Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 8.

ACTORS

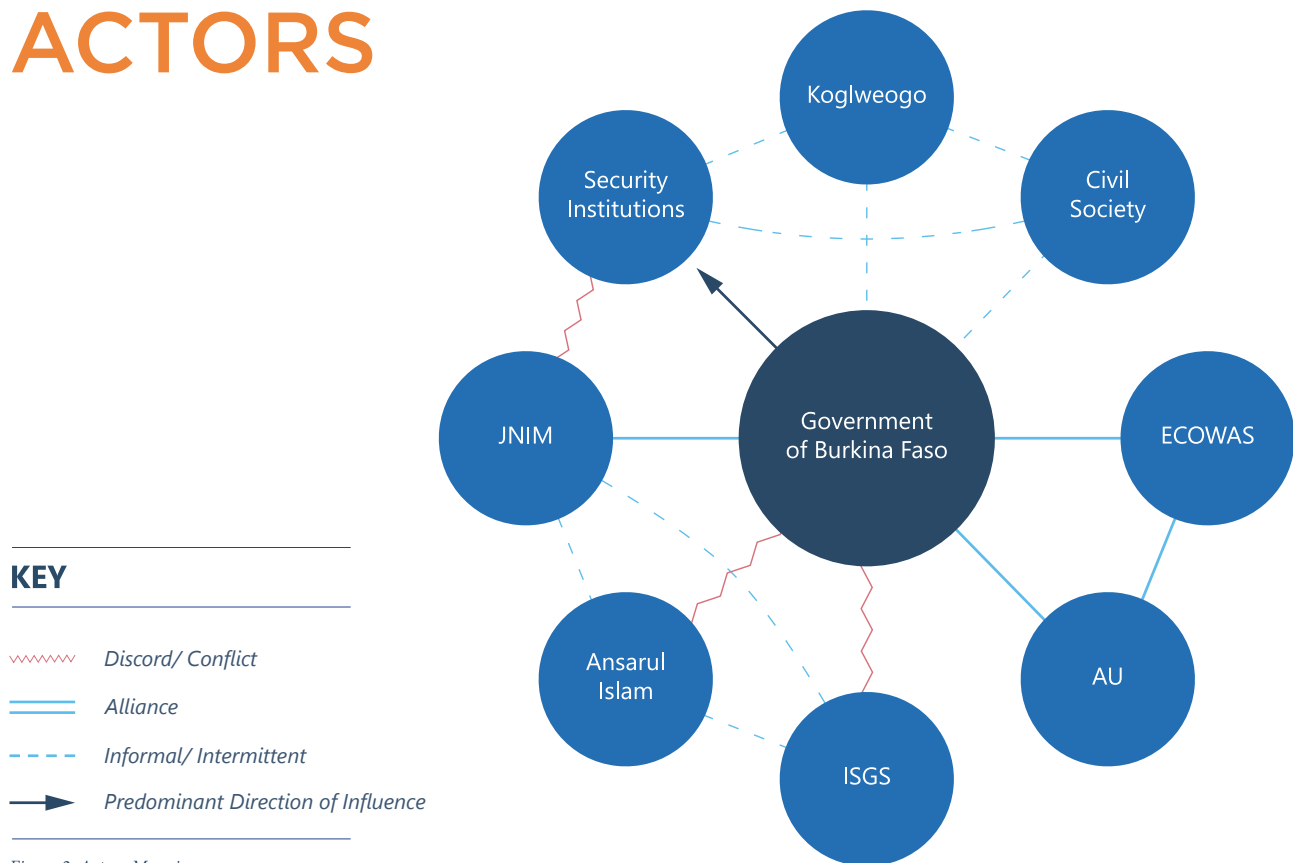


Figure 2: Actors Mapping

The government of Burkina Faso

The government of Burkina Faso, as considered in this report, is comprised of the President as well as the Prime Minister and his entire cabinet.³⁵ These entities and authorities define Burkina Faso's national policies according to the constitution.³⁶ Yet the capacities of the government remain weak due to the series of coup d'états and subsequent authoritarian rules that hamper its democratisation process and economic security thereby preventing the State from earning sufficient income to sustain its development programmes. As a result, state institutions are unable to properly respond to the needs of the citizenry and effectively govern its entire territory. In addition, the government is nurturing strained relationships with rural communities, especially in the northern part of the country, and to some extent with the whole citizenry over the demonstrations of September 2018 that raised issues of increasing life cost, unemployment and the inability of the state to properly address the extremist insurgency in the North. Although the state gets support from regional and international partners such as ECOWAS, the African Union, the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union and the United Nations, among others, it is still struggling to develop the country and ensure good life conditions for its citizenry.

³⁵ Republic of Burkina Faso. (2015). *Constitution of Burkina Faso articles 36 -77*.

³⁶ Republic of Burkina Faso. (2015). *Ibid. Articles 36 -77*.

Security institutions

Security institutions of Burkina Faso broadly include the state security providers as well as the non-state security entities.³⁷ The state security providers embrace the military forces in charge of protecting the country against external threats, the gendarmerie (which is hybrid as it simultaneously performs military and police duties) and the police forces in charge of the internal security (protection of individuals and goods).³⁸ The non-state security entities are private security firms, local associations that currently play a major role in the security field, local safety committees in rural areas and ordinary citizens. Serious weaknesses are ingrained in Burkina Faso's security sector. These include, among others, economic grievances over poor pay and housing problems although the government made efforts to meet the demands.³⁹ Further, the security forces are politically, generationally⁴⁰ and, to some extent, ethnically fractionised.⁴¹ The combination of these problems has always threatened the stability of Burkina Faso to the extent that they could foster chaos in the country. Corruption and patronage among senior officers (embezzlement of junior officers' incentives for housing and undeserved promotion of certain soldiers) undermine unity within the security forces.⁴² Lack of

³⁷ Burkina Faso. (2003). *Act No. 032 AN of 14/05/2003 on internal security*

³⁸ Republic of Burkina Faso. (2015). *Ibid. Articles 124-136*.

³⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid. Page 25*.

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group. (2019, January 28). *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid. Page 10*.

⁴² International Crisis Group. (2019, January 28). *Ibid.*

equipment (air force and heavy weapons) and training also compromises the military operations undertaken to combat terrorism in the country.⁴³ Besides, lack of efficient follow up after the reinsertion of 1300 RSP's soldiers in the army became another source of fragility of the security apparatus. For instance, ex-RSP soldiers attacked arms depot in Yimdi in January 2016.⁴⁴ Additionally, the security forces are generally perceived among the citizenry more as a risk than a security guarantee as they have been utilised as a terror tool for years.⁴⁵ In that context, self-defence groups in areas under extremist and banditry threats with a quasi-absence of security forces are proliferating.

Self-defence groups

The most known and active self-defence groups in Burkina Faso are the Koglweogo. Koglweogo basically means guardians of the bush.⁴⁶ The phenomenon of Koglweogo is not new to Burkina Faso, it dates back to the 15th Century in northern Burkina Faso.⁴⁷ The Koglweogo groups are generally comprised of agricultural workers and livestock farmers.⁴⁸ They were initially dedicated to protecting the forests and struggling against wood trafficking in rural zones.⁴⁹ They gradually extended their scope to combating livestock theft, robberies and armed attacks.⁵⁰ Some of them are recognised by the State in the northern part and have been acting as supports for security actors to discreetly fill the gaps in hardly accessible remote areas.⁵¹ Yet, the security vacuum in certain areas of the country fostered the proliferation of those groups as local community under threat took responsibility for their own safety.⁵² The recent emergence of Koglweogo groups was

43 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page 14.

44 Le Point. (2016, January 22). *Burkina Faso : un dépôt d'armes attaqué par d'anciens putschistes*. Retrieved from https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/burkina-faso-un-depot-d-armes-attaque-par-d-anciens-putschistes-22-01-2016-2011896_24.php

45 Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 25.

46 In Mooré language the largest ethnic group of the country.

47 Centre for Democracy. *Koglweogo: The risk of community ownership of security*. Retrieved from

<https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18259/Koglweogos-the-Risk-of-Community-Ownership-of-Security.pdf>

48 Centre for Democracy. *Koglweogo: The risk of community ownership of security*. Retrieved from

<https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18259/Koglweogos-the-Risk-of-Community-Ownership-of-Security.pdf>

49 Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 22

50 Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid.* Page 22.

51 Centre for Democracy. *Koglweogo: The risk of community ownership of security*. Retrieved from

<https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18259/Koglweogos-the-Risk-of-Community-Ownership-of-Security.pdf>

52 Quidelleur, T., & Dupuy R. D. C. (2018, November). *Mouvement d'autodéfense Burkina Faso: Diffusion et structuration des groupes Koglweogo*. Network of researchers in international affairs (NORLA). Page 3. Retrieved from <https://www.noria-research.com/fr/mouvement-dautodéfense-au-burkina-faso-diffusion-et-structuration-des-groupes-koglweogo/>

observed in 2009 in the locality of Mane, in Sanmatenga province.⁵³ Since that period, Koglweogo proliferated in several regions of Burkina Faso - Plateau-central, the East-central, the North-central and the South-central. They generally act under the auspices of traditional chieftaincies who also facilitate recruitment through their patronage network.⁵⁴

Contrary to their original role of support for security forces, Koglweogo groups currently demarcate themselves from the state security and justice apparatus although the state officially allowed them to participate in the fight against insecurity through a decree issued in 2016.⁵⁵ The groups argue that they are closer to the citizenry, especially the rural people, and are able to deliver quick and efficient justice services that the state apparatus fails to provide.⁵⁶ They exploit frustrations that resulted from the bureaucracy of the security forces and the justice institutions to get support from local communities and gain some political legitimacy.⁵⁷ However, their legitimacy is called into question by certain local communities and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) due to human rights abuses (corporal punishment, illegal fines and taxes) they often commit.⁵⁸ The Koglweogo strongly draw on ethnic lines and they are courted by political parties who rely on them to mobilise voters in their respective areas during the upcoming 2020 elections. The fear is about the risks of manipulation of those groups by political parties in 2020 to intimidate contenders and secure votes.⁵⁹ In that case, violent ethnic or communal conflicts, with the potential to worsen the current situation, could spark as in central Mali.

Extremist groups

Jamaat Nosra al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) - Group for Support to Islam and Muslims (GSIM) in English - and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) are the main violent extremist groups currently operating in Burkina Faso. They are connected to more or less

53 The Sanmatenga province is located in North-Central Burkina Faso.

54 Centre for Democracy. *Koglweogo: The risk of community ownership of security*. Retrieved from

<https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18259/Koglweogos-the-Risk-of-Community-Ownership-of-Security.pdf>

55 United Nations Human Rights Council. (2019, November 14). *Experts of the Committee against Torture urge Burkina Faso to safeguard human rights while combating terrorism and insecurity*. Press release. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=25299&LangID=E>

56 Quidelleur, T., & Dupuy R. D. C. (2018, November). *Ibid.* Page 7.

57 Quidelleur, T., & Dupuy R. D. C. (2018, November). *Ibid.* Page 5.

58 Le Centre d'Information et de Formation en matière de Droits Humains en Afrique (CIFDHA) & La Clinique internationale de défense des droits humains de l'UQAM (CIDDHU). (2019, March). *Deuxième rapport périodique sur la mise en œuvre par le Burkina Faso de la convention contre la torture*. Page 27.

59 Interview with a country expert, December 11, 2019 via WhatsApp.

structured diverse small local groups of traffickers and violent extremists including Ansarul Islam.

Jamaat Nosra al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) was formed in 2017 following the merger of Ansar Dine, Al Mourabitoun, the Macina Liberation Front (MLF) and the Sahara branch of AQIM. The group has been led by Iyad Ag Ghaly since 2017⁶⁰ and is comprised of at least 1,800 persons shared between Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Northern Libya.⁶¹ In Burkina Faso, the group took over Ansarul Islam (the Sahel region) and became the leader of violent extremism in the northern part.⁶² The overall objective of JNIM is similar to AQIM's goals, building a Salafi-Islamist State and ruling the areas it occupies (currently the greater Sahel region) under the Sharia Law.⁶³ To achieve that purpose, the group developed modus operandi majorly comprised of kidnappings for ransom, suicide bombings, weaponised attacks against state symbols, and the use of Explosive Improvised Devices (EIDs).⁶⁴ Moreover, the group generates incomes from various sources including illicit activities such as drugs, arms, human trafficking and robberies through collaboration with organised local criminals; and legal businesses (trade and non-profit organisations among others).⁶⁵ Yet the clandestine nature of those activities does not allow a precise evaluation of the amounts generated. However, the intensification of terrorist attacks in the greater Sahel region including Burkina Faso could indicate that those incomes are enough to finance sophisticated weapons and EIDs. Concretely, GSIM provides protection, logistical (vehicles) and technical (training and arms) supports to the traffickers and in return benefits the illicit products generated by those groups.⁶⁶ As such, GSIM and traffickers work together as a whole as the latter have been radicalised and, under the auspices of the former, are engaged in various complex attacks against security forces and other targets. Yet, incomes generated via collaboration with local traffickers are means for the survival and growth of GSIM, not ends.⁶⁷ GSIM nurtures connections with

60 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "Ansarul Islam." Ibid.

61 Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

62 Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

63 Center for Strategic and International Studies. (2018). *Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM)*. Retrieved from <https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin>.

64 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "Ansarul Islam." Ibid.

65 Institut International des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques. (IRIS). (2018, August). *Contexte sécuritaire au Nord et Centre du Mali : les enjeux d'acteurs à l'horizon 2019. Observatoire de la Prospective Humanitaire*. Page 18.

66 Interview with a country expert, December 11, 2019 via WhatsApp.

67 Assanvo, W. (2019, December 10). *Is organised crime fuelling terror groups in Liptako-Gourma?* Institute for Security Studies. ISS Today. Retrieved from <https://isafrica.org/iss-today/is-organised-crime-fuelling-terror-groups-in-liptako-gourma>

Ansarul Islam (the remaining faction after Ibrahim Malam Dicko's death) for local support. With its means and connections, the group has the capacity to fuel conflicts in Burkina Faso.

The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) is an affiliate of the Islamic State (IS) that operates in the West Africa Sahel region (Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso). Its emergence dates back to May 2015 when its leader swore allegiance to the IS.⁶⁸ The goals of the ISGS draw on those of the IS and aim at restoring the Islamic caliphate in the areas the group captures.⁶⁹ It received personnel from the Katiba Salaheddine and a group of Fulani militants defected from MLF.⁷⁰ However, since the fall of IS's last stronghold in Baghouz (eastern Syria) in March 2019 and the launch of "the best for the righteous" propaganda campaign, ISGS gained strong support from IS. The group intensified large-scale attacks in the greater Sahel region, particularly in Burkina Faso having its stronghold in the North-East of the country along the border with Niger.⁷¹ In that region, ISGS controls most of the gold mining sites and strives to rally fragmented local terror groups and traffickers disparately operating following their respective interests.⁷² ISGS, thus provides technical and logistical assistance to those groups and attempts to coordinate their actions and activities.⁷³ For ISGS, the ultimate goal is to gain their support and enlarge their network to facilitate complex attacks and increase incomes from illicit activities (drugs, arms trafficking and kidnappings among others).

Although ISGS nurtures conflictual relationships with AQIM and other affiliates of Al Qaeda in the Sahel region as per the rivalry opposing the greater IS and Al Qaeda⁷⁴, the group seems to collaborate with GSIM in north-eastern Burkina Faso.⁷⁵ For instance, incursions of GSIM are noticed in the region probably to give logistical or technical (installation of EIDs) support to

68 European Council on Foreign Affairs. (2019, May). *The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)*. Retrieved from https://www.ecfr.eu/menalsahel_mapping/isgs

69 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara." Ibid.

70 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara." Retrieved from <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/islamic-state-greater-sahara>

71 Biao, C. (2019, September 26). *Offensive de l'État islamique dans le Sabel, renouveau de la stratégie "Baqiya wal Tatamadad" ?* WHATI. *Contribution Paix et Sécurité*. Retrieved from <https://www.wathi.org/debat-id/contribution-paix-et-securite/offensive-de-letat-islamique-dans-le-sabel-renouveau-de-la-strategie-baqiya-wal-tatamadad/>.

72 Libre Info. (2019, March 29). *Terrorisme au Sabel: "Le Mali est un vrai laboratoire à ciel ouvert pour le Burkina"* (expert Mahamadou Savadogo). *Edito de la semaine*. Retrieved from <https://libreinfo.net/terrorisme-au-sabel-le-mali-est-un-vrai-laboratoire-a-ciel-ouvert-pour-le-burkina-expert-mahamadou-savadogo/>.

73 Libre Info. (2019, March 29). Ibid.

74 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara." Ibid.

75 Libre Info. (2019, March 29). Ibid.

ISGS. In turn, ISGS provides GSIM with hostages to be used for ransom.⁷⁶ In addition, the ISGS exploits ethnic-based conflicts such as discords between Fulani and Daoussahak groups (along the border between Burkina Faso and Niger) to reinforce their membership.⁷⁷ It mainly attracts Fulani youth seeking to counter ethnic challengers and protect their communities although it is suspected to include members from other communities within the region such as Bambara, Mossi and Bozos.⁷⁸ Executions of civilians by ISGS strained its relationships with rural populations in Burkina Faso.⁷⁹

Ansarul Islam emerged in 2016 as the first native violent extremist group in Burkina Faso.⁸⁰ It is mainly composed of Fulani from northern Burkina Faso, but it has members from Mossi, Dogon and Songhai communities among others.⁸¹ Its main goal is a continuation of ancestral Fulani struggles using Islam to demarcate themselves from other ethnic groups.⁸² Hence, reconquer and rebuild Djeelgodji, a Fulani empire which disappeared due to French colonisation, cannot be the main goal of Ansarul Islam as that kingdom was never a unified political entity although it has been rhetorically used by Ibrahim Malam Dicko to rally supporters from Fulani communities.⁸³ The group also rejects the social structure of the Fulani community, being opposed to the dominant religious and social authority of the hereditary nobility.⁸⁴ The number of fighters of Ansarul Islam was estimated at 200 individuals in 2017.⁸⁵ The known Ansarul Islam's resource (tactical and material including arms) providers are Ansar Dine, the Katiba Macina of Amadou Koufa and the Katiba Serma.⁸⁶ This is in addition to the robberies from state's armament stocks in late 2015 and early 2016 suspiciously linked to Ansarul Islam.⁸⁷ As such, it has the capacity to negatively influence the situation in Burkina Faso. It actively

76 *Libre Info*. (2019, March 29). *Ibid*.

77 Thérault-Bénoni L.-A., & Dakono B. (2019, October 14). *Are terrorist groups stoking local conflicts in the Sahel? ISS today*. Retrieved from <https://issafrika.org/iss-today/are-terrorist-groups-stoking-local-conflicts-in-the-sahel>.

78 Thérault-Bénoni L.-A., & Dakono B. (2019, October 14). *Ibid*.

79 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara." *Ibid*.

80 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid*. Page 1.

81 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "Ansarul Islam." Retrieved from <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/ansarul-islam>

82 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid*. Page 2.

83 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid*. Page 2.

84 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid*. Page 5.

85 Le Cam, M. (2017, December 10). "Burkina Faso : confessions d'un ancien djihadiste." *Le Monde Afrique*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/12/10/confessions-d-un-djihadiste-du-burkina-vo-que-font-les-forces-de-securite-a-nos-parents-je-ne-regretterai-jamais-leur-mort_5227587_3212.html

86 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "Ansarul Islam." *Ibid*.

87 Boko, H. (2019, August 20). *Au Burkina Faso, «les jihadistes attaquent l'armée pour se ravitailler en armes et munitions»*. France 24. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/fr/20190820-burkina-faso-groupes-jihadistes-armes-munitions-G5-sahel-militaires>.

operates in northern and eastern Burkina Faso as well as along the borders between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. The group exploits Burkinabe's frustrations over the inability of the state to deliver basic services and develop the Sahel region (northern Burkina Faso) to gain their support through sermons.⁸⁸ Although it has traditionally targeted the Burkinabe police and military forces as well as French counter-terrorism forces (Barkhane), the group consistently targets civilians including traditional leaders who they suspect of collaborating with the government.⁸⁹

The emergence of other terrorist groups (ISGS and JNIM) in northern and eastern Burkina Faso and the shift in strategy after Jafar Dicko took the lead of the group following the death of his elder brother Ibrahim Malam Dicko prompted the decrease of its influence.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Ansarul Islam still has ties with the local communities (particularly Fulani Rimaibe communities) in the northern part of the country and connections with illicit traffickers as well as extremist networks in the greater Sahel region. Thus, it is still relevant to discuss the group regarding its endogenous nature and its interactions with extremist and criminal groups in Burkina Faso and the Sahel.

Civil society

Civil society in Burkina Faso is actively represented by trade unions, students' associations and human rights organisations although artists through le balai citoyen emerged as key civil society actors in President Compaoré's fall.⁹¹ These CSOs advocate in favour of better governance (through campaigns), monitor the governmental budget, denounce corruption and provide space for discussion. However, the Burkinabe civil society may lack cohesion and financial means although it shows resilience capacities.⁹² Again, its efficiency is undermined by power struggle guided by private interests. Some of the CSOs tend to be politically engaged or manipulated.⁹³ For instance, active youth organisations have been exploited by political actors. Ideological and political divides were, therefore, fostered between them.⁹⁴ As a result, civil society tends, among the Burkinabe citizenry, to be held in lower esteem and is considered as unable to play its role of citizen watcher.

88 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid*. Page 6.

89 Stanford University. (2018, July). *Mapping Militant Organizations*. "Ansarul Islam." *Ibid*.

90 Le Roux, P. (2019). *Ansarul Islam: l'essor et le déclin d'un groupe islamiste militant au Sahel*. Centre d'études stratégiques de l'Afrique. Retrieved from <https://africacenter.org/fr/spotlight/ansarul-islam-essor-et-le-declin-dun-groupe-islamiste-militant-a-sahel/>

91 Bertelsmann Stiftung. (2018). *Ibid*. "Page 21

92 Bertrand, E., Sindayigaya, A., Deceukelier, B. (2013, September). *Ibid*. Page 30.

93 Bertrand, E., Sindayigaya, A., Deceukelier, B. (2013, September). *Ibid*. Page 30.

94 Bertrand, E., Sindayigaya, A., Deceukelier, B. (2013, September). *Ibid*. Page 31.

DYNAMICS OF THE CONFLICT

From 2011 until 2014, Burkina Faso went through unprecedented demonstrations that forced President Compaoré out of office after 27 years of rule. Behind the curtain was the desire for change nurtured by the Burkinabe citizenry frustrated by 27 years of injustice, impunity and poor governance.⁹⁵ The entire social fabric, including ordinary citizens, students' organisations, civil society and military, among others, was involved. The demands of that wave of manifestations were tailored to the improvement of Burkinabes' political, social and economic life through the institution of efficient state organisms able to fairly respond to the needs of the citizenry.

In 2011, violent manifestations erupted following the death of Justin Zongo, a student who had been arrested and ill-treated by a police official.⁹⁶ The arrest and illegal punishment of Justin Zongo were an actual reprisal for having a dispute with the policeman's girlfriend.⁹⁷ The death of Zongo triggered popular unrests throughout the country and President Compaoré was prompted to dismiss the Prime Minister and his entire cabinet as well as senior military officers to defuse violence; and added the position of Minister of Defence⁹⁸ to his functions. Three suspects were subsequently jailed but President Compaoré failed to pacifically end the protests although he appointed a new Prime Minister who vowed to take measures aimed at ameliorating Burkina Faso's political management, and enhancing justice and transparency.⁹⁹ The shadowy circumstance around the death of that young student and the declaration of the regional governor saying that the young man died from meningitis highlighted the lack of transparency and the propensity to impunity that characterised the regime of President Compaoré. The same year, soldiers, including the RSP, mutinied to claim the amelioration of their service and life conditions in addition to the general social protest. That indicated the fragility of Compaoré's regime and the threat represented by the internal turmoil his regime had nurtured.

A year later, in 2012, President Compaoré publicised his will to proceed with a constitutional revision that aimed to modify the provisions of Article 37 of Burkina Faso's constitution. His intention was to have a fifth

term in office.¹⁰⁰ For that purpose, he imposed the creation of a senate in the parliamentary structure.¹⁰¹ The legal meaning was to transform Burkina Faso's unicameral parliament into a bicameral assembly with more prerogatives given to the senate, especially on constitutional matters. Deeply said, President Compaoré would have been able, through a senate in his favour, to revise the constitution without consulting the Burkinabe citizens via a referendum. The opposition parties, civil society, and ordinary citizens vigorously protested against that initiative, deeming it unconstitutional.¹⁰²

Yet, President Compaoré persisted in spite of the popular discontent and on October 30, 2014 he submitted a bill requesting a parliamentary approval for a constitutional amendment.¹⁰³ The subsequent violent demonstrations led to several casualties including at least 24 deaths, 625 wounded and lots of destructions of public facilities as security forces resorted to repressive measures.¹⁰⁴ The Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle (RSP) was cited as the main instrument of the heavy-handed state response to the unrest which later prompted the decision of the current government to dismantle it.¹⁰⁵ In addition, overlapping declarations were recorded between the President Compaoré and Burkina Faso's Army Chief of Staff announcing the dismissal of both the parliament and the government as well as the imposition of a curfew and a state of siege. Those measures were systematically rejected by the opposition parties, civil society and the citizenry.¹⁰⁶ President Compaoré was, therefore, forced to resign.¹⁰⁷ The use of coercive means such as the state of siege, military repression against demonstrators recalled the traditional method of President Compaoré's regime aiming at fostering fear to muzzle citizens and the long intricate involvement of militaries in Burkina Faso's politics.

In the aftermath of President Compaoré's resignation, General Yacouba Isaac Zida was appointed by the army as President of a military transitional regime being

100 Traoré, A., E. (2012), *Burkina Faso. Les opportunités d'un nouveau contrat social : facteurs et réalités de la crise*, Paris, L'Harmattan. Page 33.

101 Hagberg, S., Kibora, L., Ouattara, F., Konkobo A. (2015). *Au cœur de la révolution Burkinabè. Antropologie et développement*. Page 202.

102 Hagberg, S., Kibora, L., Ouattara, F., Konkobo A. (2015). *Ibid.* Pages 202-203.

103 Radio France Internationale (RFI). (2014, October 31). *Retour sur une journée insurrectionnelle au Burkina Faso*. Retrieved from <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/2min/20141030-burkina-faso-assemblee-direct-manifestants-compaore-constitution-insurrection>.

104 Amoussou, P. (2014, November 26). *Burkina : le bilan des manifestations contre Compaoré*. *Le Point Afrique*. Retrieved from https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/burkina-le-bilan-des-emeutes-contre-compaore-26-11-2014-1884651_3826.php

105 Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

106 Jeune Afrique. (2014, October 30). *Ibid.*

107 Ricotta, J. & Gaillard, B. (2014, October 3). *Burkina Faso : Compaoré démissionne*. *Europe 1*. Retrieved from <https://www.europe1.fr/international/Burkina-Faso-Compaore-demissionne-688660>

95 Bonnacase, V. (2015, January). « Sur la chute de blaise Compaoré. Autorité et colèredans les derniers jours d'un régime ». In *Politique africaine*. Editions Karthala. Page 167. Retrieved from <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-africaine-2015-1-page-151.htm>

96 Hilgers, M., & Loada, A. (2013). *Ibid.* Pages 188-189.

97 Hilgers, M., & Loada, A. (2013). *Ibid.* Pages 188.

98 France 24. (2011, April 15). *Blaise Compaoré dissout le gouvernement et limoge le chef d'état-major*. Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/fr/20110415-burkina-faso-ouagadougou-blaise-compaore-mutinerie-garde-presidentielle-dissolution-gouvernement>

99 Hilgers, M., & Loada, A. (2013). *Ibid.* Pages 188.

suspiciously sponsored by President Compaoré and General Gilbert Diendéré, Commander-in-Chief of the Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle (RSP).¹⁰⁸ However, internal (from civil society, political opposition parties) and external pressures (from ECOWAS, the AU, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN)) forced General Zida to hand over power to a civilian transitional government led by Michel Kafando, a diplomat and former Burkina Faso representative at the UN.¹⁰⁹ The civilian government was effectively appointed on November 24, 2014. The appointment of Michel Kafando was remarkable for the fact that he was the second civilian leader of the country. Nevertheless, high ranking military officers occupied key positions among the 26 Ministries of the transitional government.¹¹⁰

The coup d'état perpetrated by the RSP in 2015 underlined the high involvement of military forces in Burkina Faso's politics. Again, the nurtured dissensions within the security apparatus, due to the divide and rule approach adopted by President Compaoré, came to light as other sections of the army stood up against the RSP and threatened to force it out of power.¹¹¹ Several battalions, parachutists and armoured, respectively from Pô and Bobo Dioulasso military camps converged on Ouagadougou.¹¹² However, the swift interventions from ECOWAS, the AU, the UN and the EU allowed the return of Burkina Faso to the status quo ante. Elections that saw the victory of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré (53.5% of the popular vote) from the Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès (MPP) were subsequently organised by the transitional government on 29 November 2015.¹¹³ However, the newly elected President's vow to improve Burkinabe's living conditions was thwarted by the growing insecurity in the country.¹¹⁴

108 General Isaac Zida was the second commander of the RSP.

109 *Jeune Afrique*. (2019). Tout savoir sur Michel Kafando. Retrieved from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/personnalites/michel-kafando/>

110 *Jeune Afrique*. 2014, November 24). Transition au Burkina: 4 militaires dans un gouvernement de 26 ministres. Retrieved from <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/39939/politique/transition-au-burkina-4-militaires-dans-un-gouvernement-de-26-ministres/>

111 *France 24*. (2015, Septembre 22). L'armée du Burkina Faso exhorte les putschistes à « déposer les armes ». Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/fr/20150921-burkina-faso-armee-route-diendere-ouagadougou-putschistes-deposer-armes>

112 Biao, C. (2015, October 10). Burkina Faso: les dangers d'une stabilisation à marche forcée. *Observatoire International de l'OHADA*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/17034107/Burkina_Faso_Les_dangers_d'une_stabilisation_%C3%A0_marche_forc%C3%A9e_Rapport.

113 Abdourahmane Dia. (2015, December 1). Roch Marc Christian Kaboré elected Burkina Faso president. *BBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34971505>.

114 Le Cam, M. (2015, December 29). Burkina Faso: les grandes promesses de Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. *Le Monde Afrique*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/12/29/burkina-faso-les-grandes-promesses-de-roch-marc-christian-kaboré_4839219_3212.html

In December 2016, Ansarul Islam lunched its first attack against a joint camp of the Burkinabe military and gendarmerie forces in Nassoumbou.¹¹⁵ The group seized military supplies and destroyed vehicles.¹¹⁶ It was rightly labelled an Islamist group drawing its objectives and methods from most of the Jihadi groups operating in the greater Sahel region.¹¹⁷ However, when its grievances are looked at, Ansarul Islam appears to be exploiting the frustrations resulting from social, economic and political difficulties and the inability of the state to respond to the needs of northern Burkinabe, especially the Soum province.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the group is deeply opposed to the Fulani hereditary nobility that discriminates against the Rimaibé people historically conquered and enslaved by the Fulani¹¹⁹ and were thus denied the right to assume social and religious responsibilities.¹²⁰ Ibrahim Malam Dicko, the first leader of Ansarul Islam who was replaced after his death by his junior brother, Jafar Dicko, preached in his sermons revolt and disobedience to contest disparities fostered both by the state and the local nobility. The group has been intensifying its attacks targeting schools, Burkina Faso's security forces and the French counter-terrorism force, Barkhane. Jamaat Nosra al Islam Wal Muslimeen (JNIM), connected to Ansarul Islam through the MLF, and ISGS subsequently endorsed the attacks and extended their actions in northern and eastern Burkina Faso. From 2015 until June 2019, 283 terrorist attacks that resulted in 524 deaths and 308 wounds have been recorded in Burkina Faso.¹²¹

The inability of the state to appropriately counteract security threats in Burkina Faso fostered the revival and proliferation of self-defence groups, mostly known as Koglweogo since 2016. These groups are criticised for committing several human rights abuses and ethnic reckonings against the Fulani community that they assimilated into Ansarul Islam militants in Northern Burkina Faso.¹²²

Since the violence sparked in Burkina Faso, more than 213 murders allegedly committed by Koglweogo,

115 *Le Monde Afrique*. (2016, December 16). Burkina Faso: au moins onze militaires tués dans une attaque djihadiste. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2016/12/16/burkina-faso-au-moins-onze-militaires-tues-dans-une-attaque-djihadiste_5050230_3212.html.

116 *Stanford University*. (2018, July). Mapping Militant Organizations. "Ansarul Islam." *Ibid*.

117 *Stanford University*. (2018, July). Mapping Militant Organizations. "Ansarul Islam." *Ibid*.

118 Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid*. Page 20.

119 Gaye, S. B. (2018). *Ibid*. Page 15.

120 *International Crisis Group*. (2017, October 12). *Ibid*. Page 5.

121 Boureima. (2019, June 17). Burkina : de 2015 à 2019, 283 attaques terroristes ont fait 524 morts (bilan officiel). Retrieved from <https://www.wakatsera.com/burkina-de-2015-a-2019-283-attaques-terroristes-ont-fait-524-morts-bilan-officiel/>

122 Boureima. (2019, June 17). *Ibid*.

mostly of Fulani civilians, have been recorded.¹²³ As such a spiral of ethnic violence could spark and spread to the whole of Burkina Faso as it did in nearby central Mali. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) confirmed the high risk of escalation of ethnic conflicts in Burkina Faso, underlining that the country is faced with unprecedented ethnic-based killings which has led to about 170,447 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 676,252 people threatened by food insecurity.¹²⁴

In 2017 the government of Burkina Faso started to prioritize the military approach which was aimed at reasserting state authority in the northern regions of the country. Burkina Faso's Ministry of Defence launched two different operations in 2019. The first operation named Otapuanu took place in March and was deployed in the eastern part of the country.¹²⁵ The second, Ndofou, was in the northern part of the country with a focus on the Sahel region.¹²⁶ Yet, this approach fails to eradicate the terrorist threat due to several reasons.¹²⁷ For instance, the army faces difficulties to mobilise support from local populations due to biased behaviours of soldiers that worsen historical conflictual relationships between the state and the northern populations, especially in Soum province.¹²⁸ Human rights abuses (arbitrary arrests and assassinations) suspiciously committed by the national forces of Burkina Faso were reported.¹²⁹ Those abuses are said to have mainly targeted Fulani accused of being partners in crime with the Ansarul Islam.¹³⁰ This raised the risk of large numbers of individuals joining the ranks of terrorist groups such as Ansarul Islam, JNIM and ISGS.¹³¹ Moreover, the massive deployment of the security forces in the northern and eastern parts of Burkina Faso reduces the capacities of security forces to protect other regions.¹³²

In addition, the economic cost of Burkina Faso's military-centred response to violent extremism might rapidly become unbearable knowing it is a low-income

123 Boureima. (2019, June 17). *Ibid.*

124 UNOCHA. (2019, January-March). *Burkina Faso: Bilan de la réponse humanitaire*. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Burkina%20Faso_Bilan%20de%20la%20reponse_Jan_Mars%202019.pdf

125 Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

126 Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

127 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page i.

128 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page 17.

129 Human Rights Watch. (2019, March 22). *Burkina Faso : Des atrocités commises par les islamistes armés et par les forces de sécurité*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2019/03/22/burkina-faso-des-atrocites-commises-par-les-islamistes-armes-et-par-les-forces-de>

130 Corinne Dufka. (2019, June 12). *Ibid.*

131 Corinne Dufka. (2019, June 12). *Ibid.*

132 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page 12.

country. For instance, over the past five years the Burkinabe government doubled its military expenses, from \$150 million in 2014 to nearly \$300 million in 2018.¹³³ However, the government tries to diversify its response to violent extremism in the country. For that purpose, the Centre for Citizen Monitoring and Analysis of Public Policies (CDCAP in French) was created to build confidence among the vulnerable communities by creating mechanisms aiming at gathering contributions from populations in remote areas and sharing them with the relevant authorities. This was a will to foster inclusion and participation among the rural populations and youth to bring about a collective and multi-dimensional management of the security threat in Burkina Faso.

In 2018, 264 human rights abuses, mostly against Fulani civilians, including arbitrary arrests, ill-treatments and assassinations, by Burkina Faso security forces were recorded¹³⁴. In that context, distrust was deepened between security forces and northern Burkina Faso populations.¹³⁵

The increasing life cost, contrasting with the low purchasing power of the citizenry as well as the inefficiency of the State to properly respond to security issues in northern Burkina Faso in spite of the huge financial allocation, strains the relationships between the citizenry and the state. Violent demonstrations have been recorded in November 2018 to protest the loss of lives, employment and security issues.¹³⁶ In addition, the repeated complaints of the police forces over the lack of equipment led to strikes throughout the country especially in the northern regions.¹³⁷ As an illustration, the police forces, only representatives of state security forces in certain northern areas, closed offices and left for days to protest against issues of inadequate equipment.¹³⁸ Generally, opposition parties aptly capitalize on such difficulties, especially in view of the 2020 presidential election.

In 2019, the increase in terrorist attacks, public discontent over poor living conditions, and the

133 Tian, N., Fleurant, A., Kuimova, A., Wezeman, P. D. and Wezeman, S. T. (2018). *Trends in world military expenditure, 2018*. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Fact sheet. Page 8. Retrieved from https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/jf_1904_milex_2018_0.pdf

134 Boureima. (2019, June 17). *Ibid.*

135 International Crisis Group. (2017, October 12). *Ibid.* Page 17.

136 Douce, S. (2018, December 3). *Au Burkina Faso, les « chemises rouges » marchent contre la vie chère*. *Le monde Afrique*. Retrieved from https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2018/12/03/au-burkina-faso-les-chemises-rouges-marchent-contre-la-vie-chere_5392101_3212.html

137 Kini, A. (2016). *Grève des policiers et faits de société au menu des quotidiens burkinabè*. *APA News*. Retrieved from <http://apanews.net/fr/pays/burkina-faso/news/ greve-des-policiers-et-faits-de-societe-au-menu-des-quotidiens-burkinabe>.

138 Libreinfo. (2019, September 13). *Djibo: la police fait ses bagages*. Retrieved from <https://libreinfo.net/djibola-police-fait-ses-bagages/>.

inefficiency of the government's counter-terrorism strategy constituted the main threats to stability in Burkina Faso.

Yet, there exist capacities for resilience in Burkina Faso especially in civil society organizations (CSOs). For instance, the Burkinabe section of the West African Network for Peace building (WANEP Burkina Faso) organised consultations with 35 CSOs and representatives of Burkina Faso's government from 23 to 24 October 2019.¹³⁹ The aim of these consultation sessions was to prevent socio-political conflicts and foster coordination between CSOs and the government to reinforce social cohesion for peaceful, free and fair elections in 2020.¹⁴⁰ As such, the responsibilities of CSOs and the government in the current deleterious social cohesion in Burkina Faso were discussed. Most recently, from 20 to 23 November 2019, the Réseau Zoodo¹⁴¹ Action Solidarité (REZAS) hosted the third edition of the festival of solidarities in the region of the Plateau central (central part of Burkina Faso).¹⁴² The necessity to prevent violent extremism was emphasized and issues such as inter-faith, inter-generational and authorities-citizenry dialogues as well as the harmonisation of civic education methods and international cooperation policies were among the main topics of discussion. Moreover, the Burkinabe Movement for Human and People's Rights initiated actions aiming at reinforcing sentiments of fair and impartial administration of justice among the most vulnerable citizens. CSOs arrange legal actions on behalf of aggrieved communities providing with pro bono lawyers to defend their respective cases.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Sareba, M. (2019, October 23). *Élections de 2020 : Le WANEP Burkina et des OSC peaufinent des stratégies de promotion de la cohésion sociale*. Omega. Retrieved from <http://omegabf.info/societe/elections-de-2020-le-wanep-burkina-et-des-osc-peaufinent-des-strategies-de-promotion-de-la-cohesion-sociale/>

¹⁴⁰ Sareba, M. (2019, October 23). *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Zoodo means friendship in Mooré language.

¹⁴² Maison des Droits de l'Homme (MDH). (2019, November 11). *Burkina Faso: Retour sur la troisième édition du Festival des solidarités au Plateau Central*.

¹⁴³ Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

CURRENT RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

ECOWAS and AU interventions

In the aftermath of the political crisis that occurred in 2014, a joint mediation mission including ECOWAS, the AU and the UN was sent to Ouagadougou.¹⁴⁴ The ECOWAS delegation led the mission with former President John Dramani Mahama (Ghana), President Macky Sall (Senegal) and former President Goodluck Johnathan (Nigeria).¹⁴⁵ The mission insisted on the need for the conflict parties to find a consensus about a civilian to lead the transition, forming a one-year political inclusive transitional government, and organising presidential and legislative elections by November 2015.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, a contact group chaired by President Macky Sall was established.¹⁴⁷ President Macky Sall subsequently appointed a special envoy for Burkina Faso.¹⁴⁸ At that stage the interventions were coordinated between ECOWAS and the AU as suggested by the joint mission which included the UN. Yet, the coup d'état perpetrated by the Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle (RSP) brought a new trend. ECOWAS' intervention was largely criticised by the Burkinabe citizenry and most of the prominent actors such as civil society and political parties.¹⁴⁹ ECOWAS' fairness was called into question due to its longer-term relationship with President Compaoré who was suspected of holding connections among the organisations' leaders.¹⁵⁰

ECOWAS' mediation process in Burkina Faso resulted in a general failure mainly due to the lack of experience among the mediators who were leading their first mediation mission under complex circumstances.¹⁵¹ In due course, ECOWAS' mediation team made avoidable mistakes which reinforced distrust between the organisation, the conflict parties and the majority of the Burkinabe citizenry. The comprehensive solution and the short-related time frame adopted by ECOWAS to respond to the deep-rooted Burkinabe conflict were inadequate¹⁵². In addition, the mediation team tailored and proposed an agreement without sufficiently consulting the Burkinabe antagonist parties.¹⁵³ The feeling among the citizenry and the antagonist that President Compaoré had ties with the organisation and

West African heads of state considerably prevented ECOWAS from intervening firmly and confidently.

Following the popular uprising of 2014, the AU stood by the principle of upholding the Burkinabe constitution although the event resulted in a military take-over and the suspension of the Burkinabe constitution.¹⁵⁴ The AU subsequently reacted by firmly condemning that "short coup" in its November 1, 2014¹⁵⁵ statement. Yet coordination concerns came out whilst AU's actions were showing a strong desire to coordinate efforts with the UN and ECOWAS.¹⁵⁶ Among other actions in light of the AU's desire to coordinate, the pan-African organisation appointed a special envoy to synergise efforts between the AU, ECOWAS and the UN¹⁵⁷. Yet the coup d'état of 2015 highlighted the need for clarification of the principle of subsidiarity between the AU and Regional Economic Communities (RECs).¹⁵⁸

The African Union, in preventing the escalation of the 2015 coup d'état in Burkina Faso, acted through its Peace and Security Council (AUPSC).¹⁵⁹ AU's intervention deeply relied on the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance ratified by Burkina Faso in 2010 as member of the organisation. The core principles that guided AU's intervention in Burkina Faso included support to the constitution of Burkina Faso, insistence on the obedience of security institutions to the civilian authority, and seeking of internationally coordinated efforts to solve the concern.¹⁶⁰ In that context, all forms of compromises falling out of the boundaries of the Charter were rejected by AUPSC and the AU drew hard lines against the coup leaders. The AU immediately took political, economic and administrative measures against the coup leaders including Burkina Faso's suspension from all AU's activities, freeze of assets and travel ban.¹⁶¹ The AU also mobilised the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) to deny the coup leaders the use of Burkina Faso's reserves in the Central Bank of the West African States (CBWAS).¹⁶² The AU was firmly determined to return to the *status quo ante* without any form of compromise.

144 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). "Assessment of ECOWAS Interventions in Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso and the Gambia". *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, Volume II, Issue IV. ISSN 2454-6186. Page 140.

145 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 142.

146 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 140.

147 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 140.

148 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 140.

149 BBC News. (2015, September 22). *Burkina Faso coup leader Gen Diendere defies ultimatum*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34321961>

150 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 141.

151 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 141.

152 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 141.

153 Akale, C., Udegbuman, K.C., Sanda, J. (2018, April). *Ibid.* Page 141.

154 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Burkina Faso a test for the AU's impact on crises*. PSC Insights. Retrieved from <https://issafrica.org/pscreport/psc-insights/burkina-faso-a-test-for-the-aus-impact-on-crises>.

155 AUPSC. (2014, November 1). *The African Union calls for a civilian-led and consensual transition in Burkina Faso*. <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/the-african-union-calls-for-a-civilian-led-and-consensual-transition-in-burkina-faso>

156 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

157 AUPSC. (2014, November 4). *The African Union appoints a special envoy for Burkina Faso*. Press release. Retrieved from <http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/the-african-union-appoints-a-special-envoy-for-burkina-faso>

158 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

159 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

160 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

161 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

162 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

On the contrary, ECOWAS was looking for concessions with the coup leaders for the sake of peace, making its intervention more conciliatory than the AUPSC's.¹⁶³ Although ECOWAS proposed a political agreement that demanded the release of detainees, the restoration of transitional institutions and the withdrawal of the military from the political sphere, it contradictorily showed its will to grant amnesty to junta members.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, ECOWAS called for a transparent, free and inclusive process. Such a call could have meant, between the lines, an approval for the demand of the RSP to allow CDP members to participate in the 2015 elections.¹⁶⁵ In that regard, ECOWAS' approach was substantially divergent from AU's firm position that did not open path for any concession and aimed at a return to the status quo ante.

The contrasted positions between the AU and ECOWAS underline the challenges faced in the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity, complementarity, and proximity advantage regarding AU-RECs relations. This raises the question of whether the RECs are bound to implement the AU's resolutions or the AU should follow and support the actions undertaken by RECs.¹⁶⁶

The joint G5 Sahel-France summit hosted in Pau (France) on 11 January 2020 brought about new perspectives regarding the response to security issues in the greater Sahel region. The summit made key decisions including the formation of multi-dimensional military forces namely the Coalition for the Sahel which will feature diverse European special forces and the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel.¹⁶⁷ In addition, France will add 220 soldiers to the current 5000 troops of Barkhane (potentially part of the coalition).¹⁶⁸ The actions of the coalition will focus on the Liptako Gourma known as the region of the three borders shared by Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.¹⁶⁹ This Coalition could help to stabilise the region including Burkina Faso as it would enhance the efficiency of the military response underway. However, the issue of ownership acutely persists on whether the G5 Sahel Member States are going to lead the Coalition or will follow France or the European forces having the financial, technical and material means. In addition, the coalition would need to collaborate with other actors such as the Members of the Accra Initiative, created in 2017 by Ghana, Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire to counter terrorism and struggle against trans-national organised crime in the region, for a regional synergy and avoid overlaps.¹⁷⁰

163 BBC News. (2015, September 22). *Ibid.*

164 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

165 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

166 Institute for Security Studies (ISS). (2015, November 2). *Ibid.*

167 France 24. (2020, January 13). *G5 Sahel: Emmanuel Macron annonce l'envoi de 220 militaires supplémentaires.* Retrieved from <https://www.france24.com/fr/20200113-lutte-anti-jihadiste-suivez-en-direct-la-conf%C3%A9rence-de-presse-du-g5-sahel-%C3%A0-pau>

168 France 24. (2020, January 13). *Ibid.*

169 France 24. (2020, January 13). *Ibid.*

170 Kwarkye, S., Abatan, E.J., and Matogbada, M. (2019, September 30).

L'Initiative d'Accra peut-elle prévenir le terrorisme dans les États côtiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest? Retrieved from <https://issafrica.org/fr/iss-today/linitiative-daccra-peut-elle-prevenir-le-terrorisme-dans-les-etats-cotiers-de-lafrique-de-louest>

SCENARIOS

Best-case scenario

In this prospect, terrorism would be undermined and the social discontent would be defused throughout the country. Its realisation requires coordinated actions between the government, the security forces and the populations, particularly in violence hotspots (northern and eastern Burkina Faso) aiming at sensitising the security forces and the populations about the need for them to collaborate in a confident environment for an efficient counter-terror strategy. The reinforcement of the security forces' capacities (training, good salaries and adequate equipment); coordination between the Burkina Faso's security forces, other national security forces and populations in the greater Sahel region (Niger and Mali); and counter terror forces in the region (Barkhane and the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel) to reinforce intelligence and allow joint operations would be crucial for the realisation of this scenario. In addition, a participatory and inclusive framework between the state and the citizenry would help to defuse the growing social discontent over security issues, living conditions and other governance issues that cause the current deleterious situation in Burkina Faso. The announced Coalition for the Sahel during the Joint G5-France summit of Pau should be included in this participatory and inclusive framework to sustain its eventual military success. However, the perpetuation of the current method focused on military interventions and political promises would maintain the status quo.

Most likely scenario

The government will continue relying on security forces and Koglweogo groups to contain terrorism. As such, the government might strive to reinforce its military presence. In that context, the Burkinabe military contingent, Badenya, engaged in the UN peace operation in Mali would be recalled to reinforce the troops on the ground. The government would create attractive conditions and intensify calls to recruit volunteers to join security forces. Military operations would, therefore, increase in violent hotspots. Koglweogo as well, would have more support from the state as per the decree of 2016. Moreover, the economic cost of the state's counter-terrorism strategy would shortly become unbearable. In that configuration, the current instability will impact the economic activities of the country in the tourism, agricultural and mining sectors that would in turn decrease the already low incomes on which the state relies to fund its response mechanisms to the crisis. That gearing system would prompt the state to reallocate budget lines by cutting from other vital sectors (health and education among others). Discontent would, therefore, be deepened among the whole citizenry. As such, the current status quo characterised by disparate insecurity threats from terrorist groups and human rights abuses by Burkinabe security forces and *Koglweogo* groups as well as the subsequent lack of confidence among the citizenry in violence hotspots would be maintained. Furthermore, the growing social discontent among the citizenry over security issues and poor life conditions would be nurtured, even worsened if the state does not take quick and adequate measures to address those current issues carrying a great potential of escalation.

Worst-case scenario

The turmoil in Burkina Faso could worsen and see the terrorist groups wide spreading in several regions of the country, an intensification of social unrests against the state, the eruption of ethnic conflicts fuelled by biases and abuses of security forces and Koglweogo in northern Burkina Faso as well as deep discontent within the army. In that context, if a coup d'état is not very plausible due to lack of a leader unanimously trusted by troops, spontaneous mutinies might spark within the barracks of security forces as it was the case in Burkina Faso (1968, 1983) and in Mali (2012). The biases and abuses committed by Burkina Faso's security forces could intensify the engagement of local populations, especially the Fulani, in terrorist groups such as Ansarul Islam, ISGS and JNIM or lead them to creating other local extremist groups with the potential to merge with the existing terrorist groups. Again, lack of proactive and coordinated actions from and between the state, ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, the EU and France (Barkhane) could precipitate the realisation of this scenario in Burkina Faso that would have a range of drawbacks on neighbouring coastal countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin) and the entire West African region. Furthermore, the persistence of the state to organise coupled elections (presidential and local elections) carries the potential of bringing about generalised electoral violence in 2020 given the current tensions between ethnic groups at the local level and the high risk of manipulation of self-defence groups (especially Koglweogo groups) by political parties to secure votes and intimidate potential contenders. Indeed, electoral competitions in Burkina Faso have often been sources of violence, especially at the local level.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Interview with a West Africa Sahel regional security expert, December 13, 2019 via WhatsApp.

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

To the Government of Burkina Faso

- The Government of Burkina Faso should design and implement a participatory and inclusive counter-terrorism and national security strategy that involves the citizenry, community and religious leaders, CSOs, self-defence groups (Koglweogo groups) as well as security forces to prevent human rights abuses and undermine the growing social discontent over security issues.
- It should create a participatory and inclusive space for dialogue and decision making to discuss and adopt sustainable consensual solutions to governance issues (reduce disparities and improve delivery of social basic services) and enhance the national economy and life conditions.
- Further, it should resume its decentralisation process and ensure transparent and fair compliance between the central government and local authorities. Mechanisms should also be created to monitor and sanction abuse of power both at the national and local levels. In addition, the government should reinforce the judiciary system to rapidly and fairly adjudicate resources-based conflicts (especially land disputes) to build confidence among the citizenry and the state.

To the AU and ECOWAS

- The AU and ECOWAS should assist Burkina Faso in its stabilisation and democratisation processes through the relevant African peace and security instruments such as the African Union Constitutive Act (Article 3), the ECOWAS revised treaty of 1993 (Article 4), ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework and the continental early warning system. Their eventual common strategies should lean on the relevant instruments related to democracy, governance and election issues binding their Member States to ensure compliance.¹⁷²
- The AU and ECOWAS should further coordinate their actions with the UN, the counter-terror forces in the Sahel such as Barkhane and the G5 Sahel, their Member States and local communities to define a common action plan aiming at combating terrorism and organised transnational crime in the greater Sahel region and particularly in Burkina Faso.

¹⁷² Alluding to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the AU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Corruption; and the ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption.

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CONFLICT TIMELINE (1960-2019)

1960	Upper Volta gained independence from France with Maurice Yaméogo as president.
1966	Yaméogo is ousted in a military coup led by Sangoule Lamizana following unrest over a government austerity programme.
1970	New constitution approved in a national referendum allowed Lamizana to remain in power until 1975, when he was due to be replaced by an elected president.
1974	President Lamizana re-asserts authority by ousting Prime Minister Ouédraogo and dissolving parliament.
1977	New multi-party constitution promulgated, allowing President Lamizana to remain in office. He subsequently won 1978 presidential election.
1980	President Lamizana deposed in a coup led by Saye Zerbo.
1982	Saye Zerbo overthrown in a coup led by Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo following industrial unrests.
1983	Captain Thomas Sankara took power from Mr Ouedraogo in an internal power struggle and adopted radical left-wing policies.
1984	Upper Volta renamed Burkina Faso.
1987	Thomas Sankara ousted and killed in a coup led by his close aide, Blaise Compaoré.
1991	Compaoré re-elected without opposition under a new constitution.
1992	Compaoré's Organisation for Popular Democracy-Labour Movement won a majority of seats in the first multi-party parliamentary elections since 1978.
1998	Compaoré largely won presidential election.
2004	Military tribunal tried 13 people accused of plotting coup against President Compaore in October 2003. Army captain Luther Ouali jailed for 10 years for masterminding plot.
2005	President Compaoré wins a third straight term in office.
2006	Burkina Faso postponed a regional economic summit after deadly gun battles between police and soldiers in the capital.
2007 May	The ruling party won a majority in parliamentary elections.
2008 April	Two-day general strike followed weeks of protests about high living costs and call for wage increases.
2010	Presidential elections. President Compaoré gained another term in office.
2011 March	Weeks of violent protests followed the death of a student in police custody.
2011 April	Soldiers, presidential guards mutinied over unpaid allowances. Thousands of people protested over food prices.
2011 July	Seven people were killed when government forces violently suppressed mutiny in Bobo Dioulasso.

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- 2013 April** International Court of Justice in the Hague settled a decades-old border dispute between Niger and Burkina Faso.
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- 2013 July** Thousands of demonstrators took to the streets over plans to create a Senate. Opposition leaders said the Senate would allow President Compaoré to extend his rule.
-
- 2014 January** Demonstrators across the country opposed possible plans by President Compaore to prolong his rule.
-
- 2014 October** More mass protests against proposed constitutional changes to allow the president another five years in power turned into mass violent demonstrations that drove President Compaore from office.
-
- 2014 November** Agreement reached on a framework for a transitional government to run the country until elections proposed for the end of 2015. Political and military leaders chose former Foreign Minister Michel Kafando as interim president.
-
- 2015 September** Acting President Kafando faced down coup attempt by RSP's soldiers allies of Blaise Compaore.
-
- 2015 November** Former prime minister Roch Marc Christian Kabore won presidential election, comfortably beating former Economy and Finance Minister Zephirin Diabre.
-
- 2016 January** Islamist militants attacked a hotel and cafe in the capital, Ouagadougou, killing 29 people, with a majority of foreigners.
-
- 2016 December** Islamists waving black flags stormed a military base near the Mali border and killed 11 soldiers.
-
- 2017 August** 18 people were killed in a terrorist attack on a Turkish restaurant in the capital Ougadougou.
-
- 2018 March** French embassy came under attack. Sixteen people were killed, including eight extremist militants.
-
- 2019** Burkina Faso's Ministry of Defence launched two military operations in the East and the Sahel regions to counter violent extremist groups.
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