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## POLITICAL GAME IN AFRICA AS AN EXAMPLE OF TWO COUPS IN BURKINA FASO

*Abstract:*

Article is deep analysis of situation, which is taking place in the west Africa, on example of Burkina Faso. Author outlined the background of situation based on geographical and political conditions. It is shown how coups has affected on Burkina Faso and what caused them. There are described relations between Burkina Faso, France and Russia. It is reveled and explained why Burkina turned to Russia, and consequences about that. The problem of jihadists attacks like: the siege of Djibo or attacks on Burkina's capital Ouagadougou, why islamists were attracted to Burkina Faso, and results of these attacks were covered by the analysis. Article concludes with analyze of actual situation in this country and supposition what is going to happen in the future.

*Key words:*

Burkina Faso, Jihadists, France, Russia, Sahel region

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the recent ages we have been witnesses of move the global economy center from North America to Asia. This change was predicted by Nałkowski in his theory the geography course of history. In this theory he mentioned that the center of the world moves always from east to west. The center of the world is slowly moving from east Asia to near east. After near east it will come to Africa, continent soaked with problems. Hunger, poverty, unstable political situations are only few from the list with whom Africa has to deal with. The biggest world developed

countries are using this situation to use Africa resources or increase their influences. We can see examples this behavior like mines in Congo where are inhuman work conditions, or sending trash to Ghana, where are giant illegal landfills of rubbish. Africa biggest trade partners are postcolonial countries. However, some countries started process to change their politic situation, considering countries like: France, United Kingdom or United States as aiming on achieving benefits without helping countries. This mention is supported by inability to deal the jihadists problem in west Africa. These situations are improving position of Russia in this region as an alternative for west countries. It all seems like Africa is an area before game, where the biggest players have started to set their pawns, sometimes bowling over pawns of another countries. This situation took place in Mali in 2020, where after the coup country turned to Russia instead of France. The similar occurrence happened last year in Burkina Faso.

## **HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY**

Burkina Faso is country located in west Africa, in the Sahel zone. From the X century, this area was occupied by many minor tribes.

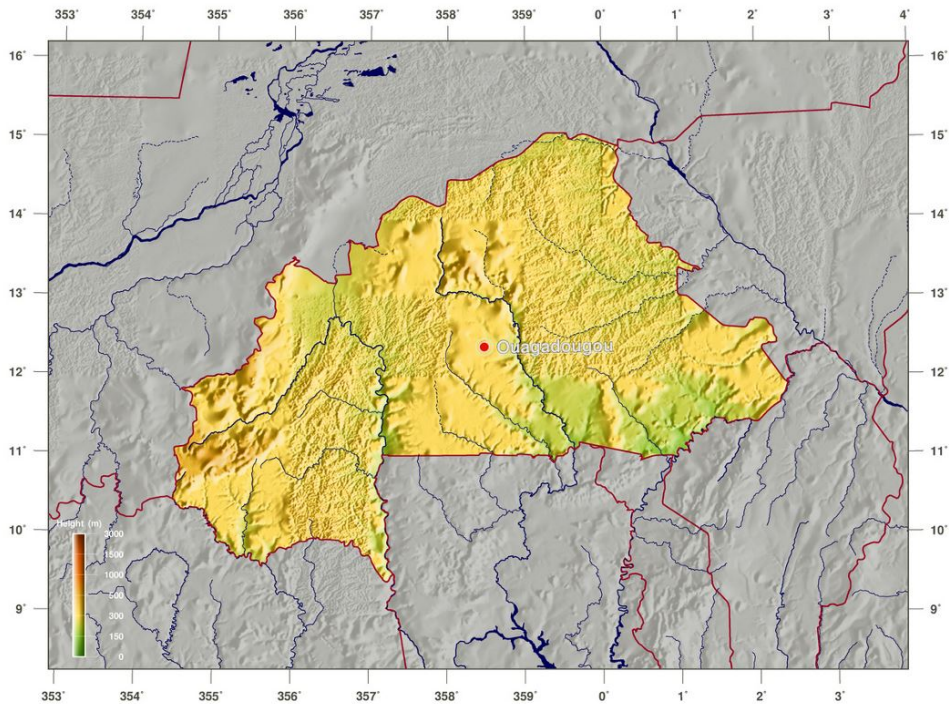
At the turn of the 19th century this region was invaded by France. Burkina gained independence in 1960 as a Upper Volta. From 1960 to 2023 there were many coups d'état punctuated by periods of democracy. It is known that in this region geographical conditions are very bad.

There is a few of raining which has impact on poor natural flora and not very fertile soils. Most of the country is cover by fawn soil called luwisol. Only small piece of fertile soils is located in the river valleys. This country is mainly lowland with small mountain rage on the west. The biggest area of the country is savanna, only in the north we can find a desert. Burkina has also a few natural resources. The most important is gold. Annual gold mining is 70 tones.

Country is inhabited by almost 19 milions people. As is it typical for African countries most of the society are young people. More then half of population is under 25 years old. The

economy is based on agriculture. Burkina exports mainly cotton and fruits. It can be seen that Burkina is poor country. They have lack of important natural resources, economy based on agriculture which is inefficient and unwell geographical conditions.

**Fig. 1: Physical map of Burkina Faso**



Source: <https://www.mapsland.com/africa/burkina-faso/large-physical-map-of-burkina-faso>

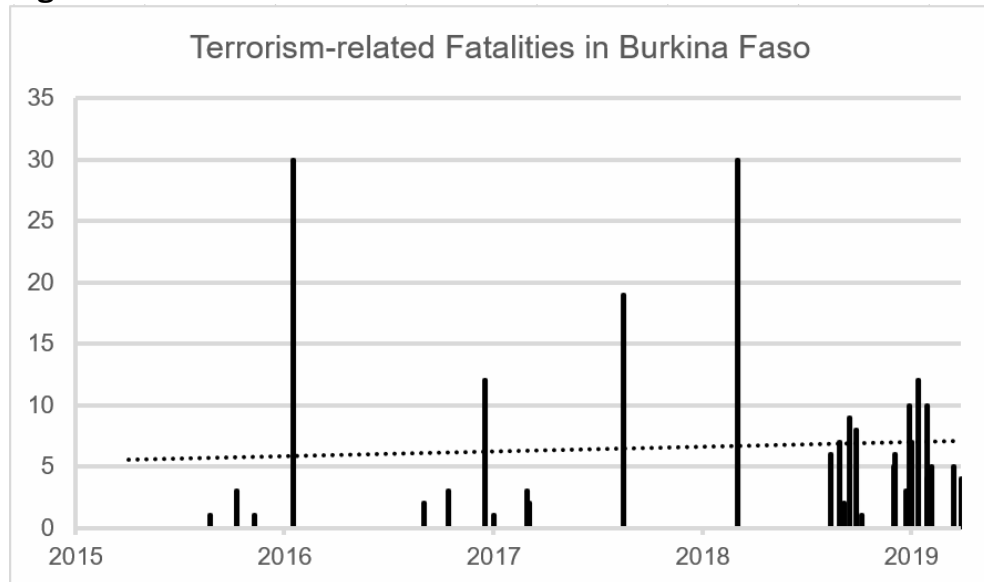
## **SOCIAL MOODS IN BURKINA FASO BEFORE FIRST COUP**

Before looking closely to the moods before coup we have to pay attention to the political system. The head of the state was president who was chosen in elections once for 5 years. The legislative power owned parliament, which term of office was also 5 years. This system has survived until first coup.

When we talk about the biggest allays of Burkina, we have to mention a France. Burkina was a France colony until 60's when they got independence. France was defending

Burkina Faso in many minor wars. This ally with some small features has stated until 2015. On this year first terrorism attack had place in Burkina Faso.

**Fig. 2: Terrorism related fatalities in Burkina Faso**



Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism\\_in\\_Burkina\\_Faso#/media/File:Burkina\\_Faso\\_Terrorism-related\\_Fatalities.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism_in_Burkina_Faso#/media/File:Burkina_Faso_Terrorism-related_Fatalities.png)

It relates to protests that took place in the end of 2014. President of Burkina called Compare, announced an amendment that abolishes the presidential term limit. It came with hostile reaction of the people who started demonstrating. Due to this happenings president had over the authorities to Honore Traore. His taking the leading was not long because he was replaced by Michela Kafando, who had support of African union. His leading was short because he was overthrown in the coup. The authority in Burkina Faso was created in late of 2015 when Roch Kabore became a President. This turmoil is showing how unstable this region was and is until this day. This situation was used by jihadists, who were searching for another unstable region like Syria to spread their religion. They started their activity on the borderline of Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali. In Burkina they started the latest, because it is said that compare had a deal with terrorists that they can operate and train in Burkina, but they would not attack his country

and would not interrupt into Burkina businesses. But after his resignation no one could stop them. They started from small actions like kidnapped a worker from a miner from gold mine or attacking police stations. The big attack took place in 2016 when they attacked a capital city Ouagadougou. The hotel was attacked by 7 terrorists, who killed 30 persons and wounded more than 56. After the attack, Burkina soldiers in their counterattack killed 4 of the terrorists. International society condemned the attacks. Similar attacks took place in 2018 when 8 persons died in the capital of Burkina. In 2019 the number of attacks started growing up, from January to February 48 people were killed. But in 2021 patient and trust to Burkina Faso government has ended. On June 4 and 5 group of terrorists killed 174 persons in two villages close to Mali border. None of terrorists group admitted to the attack, but it is said that it had to be jihadists. The one last step which brought closer to the coup was an attack in November. The terrorists attacked the police station in the south part of the country and killed 53 policemen's and 4 civilians. The most shocking fact was that they did not have any ammunition and food for almost 14 days before the attack, what makes military furious. After this terrorist attacks the wave of protesters spilled over the country. In order to not losing his job, because of hostile moods in the country president laid down prime minister Dabire, but it was only an interim measure. Another terrorist attack took place on 15 January, 10 persons were killed. It was this last seed of sand in the hourglass which ended Kabore leadership.

## **THE FIRST COUP**

On Monday 23 January 2023, in the morning the gunshots were heard close to the president's residence in capital city. Several hours after that, it started to be said that Kabore was detained by takeovers. Later the military took over the radio station, and President Kabore made a statement: that the authority was passed to the military. After that the parliament and government had been dissolved. In the evening in the national TV, soldiers made an official statement. They

said that: it was necessary because president could not manage with the terrorist's threat, the coup was not violence, and none was hurt. They added that, when the situation will be more stable, they are going to carry out the elections, but now it is impossible. The junta closed the borders, they imposed the nationwide curfew from 9 pm to 5 am. On 31 January, the military junta restored the constitution and appointed Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba as interim president.

The reaction of the citizens in Burkina was kind of unusual. They gathered in the center of Ouagadougou and started to celebrate dancing, singing and enjoying the situation. It only showed, how they got rid of this situation. The international community expressed their concern about this situation and persuaded junta to release ex-president. African union reacted far more stronger and suspended Burkina Faso membership in organization. Despite of unkindly reactions junta started their actions to cope with Islamic threat. The first challenge for the new leaders came really fast. On 16 February jihadists forces came to the city of Djibo and besieged that city. Moreover, they forced citizens of local villages like: Baama, Mandali and Baakoore to leave their homes and came to Djibo. The population of the city had increased from 60 thousand to 300 thousands of people. The city was completely besieged without ability to supply. If someone wanted to leave Djibo he or she was threatened to be killed. The junta tried to break threw the besieged or send the aim convoy, but they were ambushed by terrorists. One breakthrough was in April when military leaders attempted to talk with rebels. They agreed to open the city for convoys, but they prevented anyone from escaping. It least only for the beginning of the May, after that city was closed again without any ability to help. More than that jihadists had been still attacking and they occupied 40% of country. These failures started to splitting soldiers. Some young soldiers were saying that Damiba vision of fighting with terrorists is incoherent and not successive.



## CONNECTIONS WITH RUSSIA

The young soldiers instead of sympathizing with France turned to Russia. Russia is very pleasant partner for Africa countries. They do not require democratic standards or economical improvement. They offer a fair trade for Africa countries: we offer you a military help and you give us your resources. Thanks to this trade Russia with applause of the people is getting addictive economy of the country for their own business and broaden their influence on the world. African countries like Burkina Faso are happy because they see light in the tunnel in fighting with terrorism. So, if we look closer to the economy of Burkina, we can see how much they are under control of Russia. The second largest gold mine in Bissa and two smaller mines in Bouly and Taparko are owned by Russian company Nordgold. These mine in 2017 were generating an extraction of 428 ounces per year. Also, these mines have a huge gold reserve, which can let to exploration for many years.

**Table 1: Mining gold production**

Mine	2017 Production, koz	Proven and probable reserves, koz	Measured, Indicated and Inferred Mineral Resources, koz
Bissa	195.7	1,972	2,291
Bouly	124.2	1,696	4,762
Taparko	108.2	483	1,122

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordgold>

Nordgold is company which is part of another company Severstal. The owner of Severstal is Aleksey Mordashov who is

in the 4th place of the rich man list in Russia. There are evidences that Mordashov was donated the Russian actions against Ukraine, so it shows how close he is with Putin and how much he supports his actions. Also, when the sanctions were imposed on Russia, they used their national gold reserves to prevent rubel from total collapse. It is very possible that most of this gold comes from mines in Burkina Faso.

Russia is also using the anti-french moods. The Russian trolls in social media are telling that France is helping jihadists in order to weaken the country. Also, failure of French operation Barkhane, which was going to finish terrorism in this region is using by Russian supporters to create anti-french moods. They are persuading some popular influencers to write pro-russian posts so that their fans will support these ideas. Russia is presented as an alternative for France. They are against ideology of the west, who impose their standards and democracy, which they do not want because they mention that they are free country and can have any political system they want. Thanks to these efforts most of young people are growing up in the area where anti-west moods and pro-russians are normal. They want independence of Burkina and stronger cooperate with Russia. But also, they do not see how much their country is becoming dependent from Russia. As well Russia is beneficiary of failure of democracy in Burkina. The democratic government lead country close to collapse. The society is tired of that and need to find a solution which usually is not democratic. They are inspirated by Russia, where is not democracy but the country is seemed to be strong none wants to fight or attack them.

## **THE SECOND COUP**

Division between young and older soldiers had started to be bigger and bigger. Daimba tried to strike a balance between gaining help from France and approaching Russia. Unfortunately, his efforts had not succeeded and hostile moods against him started to be more and more popular. One last thing which caused the second coup was situation close to Djibo. On 26September, the jihadists had attacked the aid



convoy, killed 11 soldiers and 50 civilians. The limit of trust for Daimba had ended and young soldiers started preparing the coup. This time also, it was out of hurting someone. Some shots were heard close to the president's palace in the morning. Later the public TV was turned down and the main fights moved to the camp Baba Sy where was Daimba. In the evening in public tv young soldiers were shown. The new leader Capitán Ibrághim Traore had made a speech. He said that group of officers had decided to remove Daimba from his position in order to unsuccessful movements. Again, after the coup people came to celebrate, everyone was happy some had also a Russian flags. But this time joy turned into hate. Hate against France. Day after the attack Burkinabe attacked embassy and French cultural institute. It shows how big were anti-france moods. Most of the countries were concerned about the situation in Burkina Faso and called to bring back democratic government.

## **ACTUAL SITUATION IN BURKINA FASO**

In the end of January 2023 junta ordered French army to withdraw from Burkina Faso. They gave only one month to withdraw soldiers, but France had done it before the term ended. It is said to be that they were replaced by Wagner's group, but it is hard to find any evidences. Moreover, Traore called volunteers to fight. 50 thousand people volunteered and after two weeks of training they were send to fight. Unfortunately, the situation did not change so much better. The attacks still goes on. On 17February 51 soldiers were killed and on 15April 40 persons were killed and 33 persons were injured. Traore faces against challenge, which is overwhelming for him. Russia support in this area is not helpful. It showed the example of Mali, where officially Wagner's group take action and despite of that jihadists are still strong. What future is waiting for Burkina Faso? The huge military intervention in this country is needed.

**Fig. 3: Territory control in Burkina Faso 2022**



Source: <https://i.redd.it/4zugtpq7amt91.png>

However, Burkina is closing everything logical ways to help. Order to withdraw French army was the worst decision they could make. After first coup, when French involved was less they started to losing control of the country and until today they have not gotten it back. They hope that Russia will help them, but there are only hope which showed example of Mali where Russian's intervention has not changed so much.

## CONCLUSIONS

Situation in Burkina Faso shows how this region is unstable. African countries are searching way to get out from this deadlock, but often this way is incorrect. Burkina joins to Mali, which also had hope after coup, but this hope became hopeless. Most of African countries see hope for better times in coup. In recent days another coup took place, this time in Sudan. We can ask which country will be next? Niger, Chad or maybe Ivory Coast. West has to wake up and realize that they are losing their influence in Africa for Russia. Africa has a lot of natural resources and has a huge human potential. In

upcoming years. In 2100 year every third resident of the earth will be living in Africa. This will be center of the world, where most of the products will be produced and new technology will be developed. If west will lose their influences there, they will lose a big chance to be alliance of this countries and to reap the benefits from this parentship. Russia year by year is getting closer to Africa. They are already mining and using their gold and support the new generation, which want changes. If the west will abandon Africa, in upcoming years they only can look how Africa and Russia are getting rich, and they are going into shadow.

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