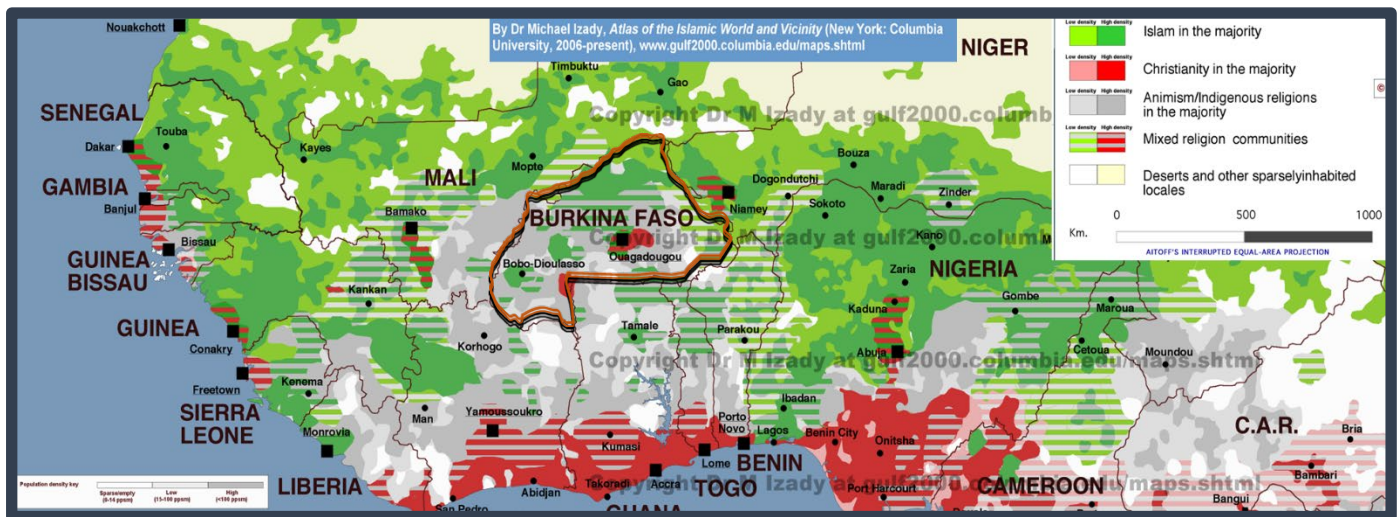


**Researcher’s Report of Country-Region-Conditions of Burkina Faso as they relate to claimant’s narrative story and as relates to his ability to be returned to Burkina Faso without undue likelihood of suffering death, injury, abduction, or other serious harm.**

**Country-Region Context.** Africa’s north is dominated by the largest desert in the world, the Great Sahara. It is larger than North America all by itself. Ancient tribes of Tamashek, Toubou, Arab, Tamazight, and Saharawi still inhabit the Sahara, based out of incomprehensible massifs or mountains, where vast lakes, oasis, and forests lay protected by the heat, wind, sand, and foreign eyes. The Sahara transitions into a semi-arid zone called the Sahel, where human life and animals live in complex societies, equally as ancient, pursuing agriculture, animal husbandry/herding, and trading that long predated the rise of Europe. Together, these two regions are home to a population greater than that of the Russian Federation.



**Figure 1 Atlas of the Islamic World and Vicinity**

**Sahel’s Arc-of-Conflict over land, identity, religion, language, and historical narrative.** The United Nations refers to the lower Sahara and its Sahelian Transition Zone as an “Arc-of-Instability.” Other organisations refer to these regions as an “Arc-of-Misery,”<sup>1</sup> while yet others refer to it as an “Arc-of-Conflict,” reminiscent of Samuel Huntington’s Clash of Civilisations.<sup>2</sup> This ‘Arc’ of conflict, misery, and instability is a vast swath of land that stretches from Mauritania in the west to Somalia in the east, and includes Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The graphic in Figure 1<sup>3</sup> illustrates one significant driver of this arc of instability, the clash of religions. Other drivers include conflicts over ethnicity, tribal authority, land, desertification, animals, crops, natural resources such as uranium, magnesium, natural gas, oil, and gold. Underlying each of these issues is the generational effects of post-colonialism and an ongoing inability to adapt ancient systems of psychosocial-emotional construction to ever intrusive globalisation of trade, travel, transportation, communication, manufacturing, and large group identity disintegration. Finally, state<sup>4</sup>, and non-state<sup>5</sup> actors have been at work, taking advantage of these large, vulnerable populations as raw material for social weaponisation against the state and regional political order that is sanctioned by the United Nations and African Union. The competitions of ideas over religion and ethnic-cultural belonging create even deeper competitions between collective identity definition, distinction, and affirmation that drive mental ideas of alienation into emotional torture of shame with both conjugating

<sup>1</sup> (MAHAMAT et al., 2023)

<sup>2</sup> (“The Arc of Conflict and Crisis,” 1996; UN Department of Public Information, 2013)

<sup>3</sup> Map of Religious distribution courtesy of Dr. Michael Izady, Atlas of the Islamic World and Vicinity, Columbia University (2006 – present), located at <https://www.gulf2000.columbia.edu/maps.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> Examples include Russian Federation’s employment of the Wagner Group and Iran’s employment of the IRGC’s Quds Force.

<sup>5</sup> Violent Extremist Organisations of all stripes as described later in this report.



into the sort of rage found in genocide.<sup>6</sup> The simultaneous competition for new or dwindling resources and the presence of external actors and their globalising ideas fuses into these existing vulnerabilities to fuel this arc of conflict, misery, and instability. As the map below from Dr. Izady illustrates, Burkina Faso lies in the Central Sahel, along with Mali to its west and Niger to its east. Its Christian population is the largest and most densely populated such minority in the northern reaches of the Sahel.

**Country of Origin Context – Burkina Faso.** Burkina Faso's 22.1 million people belong to two major West African cultural groups: the Gur (Voltaic) and the Mandé. The Voltaic are far more numerous and include the Mossi, who make up about one-half of the population. The Mossi claim descent from warriors who migrated to present-day Burkina Faso and established an empire that lasted more than 800 years. Predominantly farmers, the Mossi are still bound by the traditions of the Mogho-Naba, who hold court in Ouagadougou.<sup>7</sup> The Christian populations in Burkina Faso maintain an uneasy existence with competing Muslim evangelists and indigenous Animist communities that are resentful of the intrusion of foreign religions that drain power from the tribal leadership. Each tribal member and family is shaped and defined by the realities that indigenous religion creates. What some anthropologists and religious researchers call “Animism,” is better understood as an existential operating system of psychosocial & emotional reality. Within this existential operating system (EOS), each member’s life purpose is explained-made clear. This EOS contains the living souls-spirits of every past member and is the future repository of each current member’s own spirit after physical death. The EOS carries the instructions for each member’s male masculine and female feminine identity formation and expression. The absence of this indigenous EOS herald’s the loss of collective identity and presents a state of chaos, where the human members are cast into the darkness of ignorance, cut off from life-giving knowledge. Indigenous Animism is not a unified system of belief-knowledge-reality and variations occur between and within family-clans and tribes.

### **Tribal Power versus Religious Beliefs**

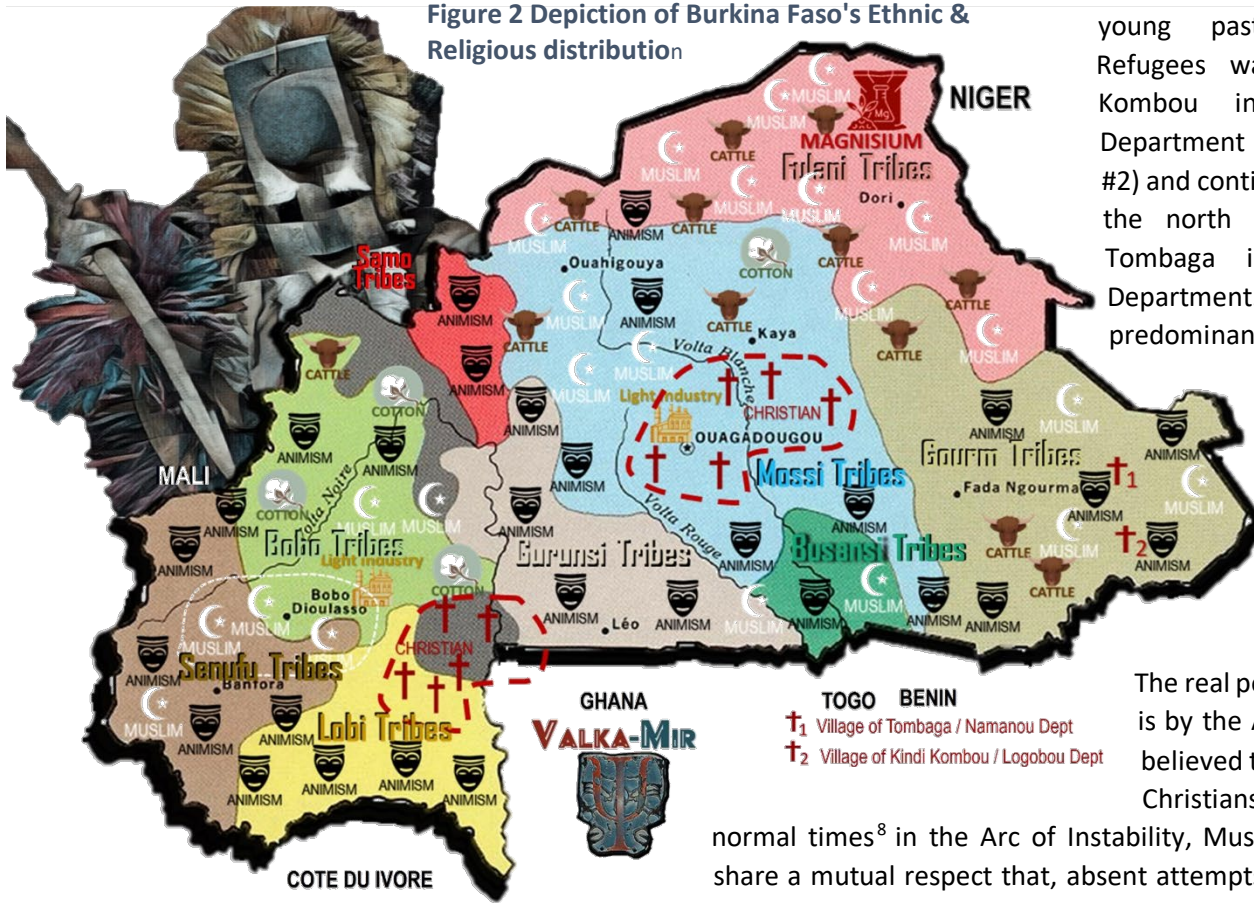
The elder-leaders of each family, clan, and tribe, determine or divine the realities within their EOS, and are positions of great power and authority. And therein lies the conflict. While these indigenous systems are sufficiently generic and fluid that other organised religions can coexist within the same framework of belief, formal organised religions such as Islam and Christianity come with their own elder-leaders that determine or divine what is real and what is not, beginning with the Prophet Mohamad for the former and Jesus of Nazareth for the latter. The family-clan-tribal elder-leaders are already in competition with the secular political leaders of the state, a fact that they accept because the secular leaders command their counties’ security forces. The Muslim Imams and the Christian pastors are often a direct threat to the health of the membership of indigenous Animist communities in Burkina Faso and the surrounding states. To survive, Imams and pastors often recruit from the ever-present pool of untouchables, people that no other family, clan, or tribe lays claim to. The year over year growth of the Islamic Ummah and the Christian Corpus in Burkina Faso has averaged ~3.0%, both growing faster than Indigenous Animist collectives. With membership size, comes a corresponding increase in authority and capacity to negotiate with the political state for resources and protection. In the graphic in figure 2, the relationship between animal herding and Islam is discernible, especially in the north and east where nomadic and semi-nomadic families-clans-tribes struggle to exist in the harsh environment. In the same graphic, the relationship between dense urban life and Christianity is discernible, following the logic of conflict avoidance with Indigenous Animism through recruitment of large numbers of unaffiliated Burkinabè peoples. In the

<sup>6</sup> (Antúnez, 2022; Cooke et al., 2016)

<sup>7</sup> Mogho Naba is the title of the reigning monarch of the Mossi ethnic group and reigns over a traditional kingdom or realm that dates to the 12th Century. The title means the "king of the world" in the language of the Mossi community, who constitute about 40% of the country's population. Baongo II has been king since 1982. Once a powerful master over his Mossi subjects, the authority of the Mogho Naba was curtailed during the years that CDP leaders Thomas Sankara, and Blaise Compaoré were in power. Today, the Mogho Naba is seen as a symbol of tradition. The influence of the king in modern political matters is because the centre of power in Burkina Faso, the capital Ouagadougou, lies at the heart of his kingdom - the Mossi Plateau. Out of respect for tradition, it is customary for leaders and influencers seeking to establish a foothold in Ouagadougou to seek his symbolic approval.



**Figure 2 Depiction of Burkina Faso's Ethnic & Religious distribution**



young pastor's case, Mr. Refugees was born in Kindi Kombou in the Longobou Department (see figure 2, note #2) and continued his ministry in the north in the village of Tombaga in the Namanou Department. This area is predominantly Muslim and Animist, and most of the Muslim imam's adherents travel the semi nomadic pastoral routes with the herds of cattle.

The real power to be lost here is by the Animists, which are believed to be Pagan by both Christians and Muslims. In

normal times<sup>8</sup> in the Arc of Instability, Muslims and Christians share a mutual respect that, absent attempts by either party to evangelise to the other, is enhanced in the metacontrast

presence of what these religions consider to be pagan animism.<sup>9</sup> My Refugees Diamano offers an accurate depiction in his narrative statement of how Christian and Muslim religious leaders think about their Animist fellow-countrymen, writing that they are "generally known as "Witch ·Young" because they worship the stone God Yuaguno, [because] of the ignorance to Jesus Christ."<sup>10</sup> The hierarchies of family-clan-tribe elders power differs from collective to collective but have similar names and formations. Shamans are usually gifted spiritualists and healers, whose greatest strengths are natural curatives, preventative medicine, and psychosocial counselling. They are often independent from, but dependent upon, the social leadership and there is nearly always an interactive relationship, especially the maintenance of social cohesion, internal order, and harmony. Threats to that cohesion, order and harmony are likely dealt with as immediate threats to the collective whole, such as an outsider attempting to subvert members' reality of their existential origination, relationship to their past loved ones, and their ideations of life beyond the physical present. According to Refugees,

*"...after I had arrived to Tombaga and I had been preaching ... I was attacked and tortured... by a group of young people... [who] had been "summoned" by what they believe to be witches in the village- all with the purpose of killing me. The group of young people are generally known as "Witch Young" ...[and] were instructed by a group of Shamans who preach about Yuaguno, about 20 of them, to find ... and kill me because of my preaching of Christianity."*<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> I describe 'normal times' as when interfaith relationships are not extremized by violent state/non-state actors seeking to weaponize an otherwise psychosocially healthy population and the numbers of non-Abrahamic religion adherents are large enough for their respective evangelical efforts to place them in close competition for new members.

<sup>9</sup> (Antúnez, 2022; Cooke et al., 2016; "The Arc of Conflict and Crisis," 1996)

<sup>10</sup> Quote drawn from Mr. Yonli's narrative submitted to USA DHS Immigration Department.

<sup>11</sup> Quote drawn from Mr. Yonli's narrative submitted to USA DHS Immigration Department.

Refugees describe the community's participants in the Witch-Youth as mainly early adolescent men and presumably women between the ages of 19 – 34, and the elder 'Witches' as being over 45-years old and wearing ceremonial masks of the sort illustrated in figure 2. These masks are what we call 'cultural symbolic objects' that possess an importance and communicate information much greater than their appearance would suggest. In the Burkinabè Gourm Tribe's Animist belief system, the mask represents a defensive shield for the wearer who is in the space between the physical world of the present and the metaphysical world of the ever-lasting. This mask-symbolic object is imbued with power from the community's long-passed loved ones who inhabit their metaphysical world, helping to keep their descendants safe from evil and misfortune. The mask works to ward off evil thoughts or spirits that may have been attached to young Refugees, given to him by his competing God – Yuaguno. As with most or all religions, there is a mix of belief and theatre that permeates the public demonstrations such as Yonli experienced and making sense of each indigenous community's attitudes towards foreign ideas, practices, or spiritual belief systems is complex. As a field practitioner, for instance, I have had to conduct tribal mediation before western medicines could be introduced to halt the spread of an infectious disease, and there is an entire body of knowledge and practice that guides such endeavours. Any resort to bypassing these cultural modes and approaching the membership within directly can lead to intense conflict, even physical violence as Refugees experienced. The beatings that Refugees endured were a first level of punishment that luckily did not end with his death or disability. Several members of NGOs that I have worked with in Africa were not so fortunate.<sup>12</sup>

**Tribal Authority versus National Authority in Burkina Faso.** The communities of Burkina Faso and most of West Africa remain psychosocially organised under sociocentric or collectivist structures of life, where hereditary forms of social authority take precedence over modern democracies and appointed structures of governance. The fathers, sons, and grandsons of long dead chiefs continue to rule the physical and social lives of Burkina Faso's various tribes and clans-families within. Members and their families are born into tribal-ethnic-religious-historical identities that are under pressure from without and within even in the most peaceful times.<sup>13</sup> These pressures translate into clashes of identity between Christianity and Islam and between the twenty centuries of Abrahamic monotheism and ten millennium of pagan beliefs. Beyond these clashes of competing collective identity,



**Tribal Chiefs of West Africa**

are the clashes between the '*realms-of-the-chiefs*' and between modernity and extremism, the denial of modern life and intrusive globalisation. Real social authority in Burkina Faso rests with collectives of hereditary chiefs who embody, or carry within them, the prototypical identity of an entire cultural collective in nearly inaccessible oral histories of traumas and glories that bind its members together in belonging.<sup>14</sup> These chiefs and their collectives, struggle to maintain their communities' identity and access to resources, power, and individuation from a national identity that is unsupported by indigenous historical narrative. So, while the previously democratic political state of Burkina Faso fielded an overt modern apparatus of socially representative state governance, real social

power remained vested in these gatekeepers of Burkina Faso's tribal bloodlines. Part of the tribal struggle involves the external influx of violent ideology in the north, brought southward into the arid Northern Plains of Burkina Faso from Mali and Niger, along with the encroaching desertification of the Sahel Transition Zone. The internal and external struggles of Burkina Faso's tribes add physical drivers and motivations to its population segments, added to their sensitive psychosocial-emotional motivations and drivers of conflict and violence. The family and extended family of the Burkinabè young people that Refugees Diamano was working to convert from ancient Animism to modern day

<sup>12</sup> The conversion of Muslims to Christianity is the encouragement of Apostasy, punishable by death. Indigenous religious traditions are not merely about membership in a church, but rather, about one's place in a mutually supporting order of spirits or souls from the past, the present, and the future. The degree that this is taken in some tribes, can indeed be, lethal.

<sup>13</sup> (Anquandah, 2013)

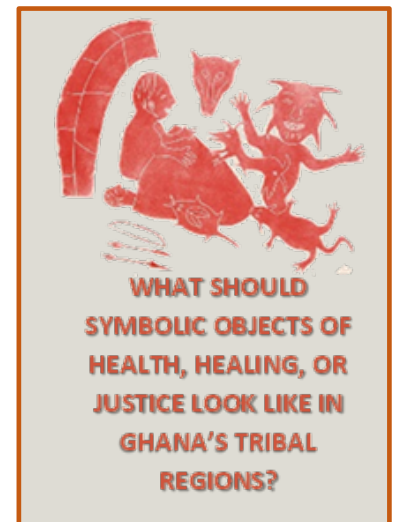
<sup>14</sup> (Boakye, 2016; Bukari et al., 2021; Ibrahim, 2018; Tonah & Anamzoya, 2016)

Christianity, belongs to one or more of these cultural collectives that are all interrelated by arranged marriages and childbirth at their outer margins. To have your children come home one day and inform you that everything you have ever known about the universe was wrong, tends to shake one's faith in a stable order of human life as Refugees discovered:

*"...the elders began telling me, through their masks, that I needed to die, because I was a Christian, because I preached the gospel, and I couldn't speak that I was so afraid. At first, I was hit with a piece of wood by the elder as hard as he could, about 5 or 6 times. I lost consciousness."*<sup>15</sup>

The fear driven anger of a group of grown men towards a teenaged Christian teacher makes sense only when we consider that their fear is existential in nature; a fear of loss of social authority, chaos, dissolution of the bonds of belonging, and disintegration of collective identity: past, present, and future. This type of fear is a phenomenon that I faced and still face, daily in my work as a psychoanalytical anthropologist working in tribal conflict mediation.

**Fragility of the Indigenous Social Structure to Psychosocial Trauma.** As a psychoanalytical anthropologist, I have studied, researched, and written about indigenous social systems for most of my professional life.<sup>16</sup> I've developed the research indicators in the box shown here over the past 30 years of field work. I collect these data points to analyse indigenous communities using lenses of cultural psychology and sociology that have been curated by anthropology to that specific cultural population segment. Scientific methodology that I and my team employ works to discover the indigenous, traditional, or customary form of social order that, under healthy conditions, operates in conformance with sociological, psychological, and emotional principals of the human life cycle. The life cycle of a community is a structure of knowledge that can be used to predict what is normal and healthy within a community, or what is damaged and broken.<sup>17</sup> Psychoanalytical anthropologists and social psychologists have been studying the scientific principles of the human life cycle for the last two centuries. An individual human life cycle has predictable stages of growth and development. Puberty, for instance, is a culturally invariant event in the lives of humans, occurring between ages 8-14 for females and 10-16 for males.<sup>18</sup> How the occasion of puberty is celebrated or observed however, varies significantly in most cultures. A family or village life cycle also has predictable stages of growth and development that are psychosocially and emotionally important.<sup>19</sup> Parenthood and grandparenthood, for instance, mark the social evolution of elder status with changes in social status and the capacity to write into the collective historical narrative. The life cycles of individuals and their membership in collectives of family, clan, tribe, and village constitute a "social system" because the human members possess an interoperable and interdependent set of behavioural structures inherited from past generations – often beyond even their deepest mythical historical narrative.<sup>20</sup> When functioning properly, these social systems provide for the physical, psychological, sociological, and emotional needs of the members, and do so in ways that are not always easily apparent to outsiders. Every cultural community that I have studied possesses coded language and secret symbols of meaning. If social systems had archetypes, then indigenous social systems would constitute the oldest forms known. The most important thing to remember about them is that they are inherited, not cognitively constructed by social scientists. This means that they have been learned one at a time because there is no universal model – except that all societies have some form of social system and a corresponding form of order and governance. But remember that the elements and organization of indigenous and traditional models of social systems will never look or seem like any system or form



<sup>15</sup> Quote drawn from Mr. Yonli's narrative submitted to USA DHS Immigration Department.

<sup>16</sup> (Christian, 2006, 2013, 2014, 2018a; Christian et al., 2017)

<sup>17</sup> (Christian, 2020)

<sup>18</sup> (Antúnez, 2022; Cooke et al., 2016)

<sup>19</sup> (Christian, 2006)

<sup>20</sup> (GOODY, 2003)



that you are familiar with. The behavioural structures within an indigenous social system sustain life and construct purpose. For some indigenous communities, purpose can seem to be simply minimal human survival in a geology, geography, or climate that at first glance, appears to be implausible. For most others, purpose involves the never-ending construction of their historical narrative and its transmission through time and space to distant generations. Often, elements of individual and collective human purpose are in a coded language of symbolism that is attached to physical objects, words, stories, poems, songs, or historical events. We call these things **Symbolic Objects**. A symbolic object is ordinary on the surface, but extraordinary in its meaning to the community that owns it. Symbolic objects serve as a coded sublanguage that makes it easier to communicate. A central purpose of this coded sublanguage imbedded into symbolic objects is to create hidden meaning that only an inner core collective understands, creating thick boundaries of participatory belonging. Refugees's narrative of the repeated attacks by the Gourm Animist community in Tombaga against him and his evangelical teachings suggest a heightened commitment by that community to prevent the emergence of a Christian community that would compete for legitimacy and social authority. The tribes of Gourm and elsewhere in Burkinabe are not monolithic, but rather a competing collection of clans large and small that compete for families' membership based on marriage, heredity, and other life factors. For the current elder-leaders and the Shamans spiritual healers who support them, this is the essence of tribal leadership; maintaining public perceptions of tribal leadership competence, which their inability to make good on their admonitions to a teenage pastor would contradict.

**RESEARCH INDICATORS OF HEALTHY INDIGENOUS SOCIAL FORMATION versus MALFORMATION / DEFORMATION**

1. What does indigenous/traditional/local health, governance, justice, marketplace, and conflict resolution infrastructure look like within this community? Who owns it? Who operates it? Where do you find it? If its broken or non-existent, how do you message it?
2. How do these indigenous/traditional/local social systems operate to meet the underlying psychosocial-emotional needs of the community? When and how are they successful? When and how do they fail?
3. Who are the principal gatekeepers in each society? How much influence and authority do they have?
4. What is their psychological organization their sociological structure, and their historical narrative?
5. What is the role and use of technology and social media for influence operations by various state and non-state actors?
6. What are the nomadic, pastoral, and other traditional (indigenous and tribal) challenges to modernization/globalization?
7. What issues regarding refugee and migrant adjustment, integration, and vulnerability to radicalization are challenging indigenous/traditional/local governance?
8. Are there ongoing child-soldier disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) issues that are damaging society and preventing conflict resolution?
9. Are there indications of civil society extremization, weaponization, suicide recruitment?
10. Has there been a transformation of vulnerable indigenous or traditional societies as part of the extremist weaponization process?
11. Are there ongoing violent extremist or criminal organizational recruitment, radicalization, extremization, mobilization and weaponization operations within vulnerable populations?

**Legal Protection and Governance in a Tribal Society. Ideological Warfare in West Africa.** Much of West Africa is engulfed in a broad, ideological war between antiquity versus globalising modernity. A war that merges the physical and the metaphysical spheres of conflict to create violent physical destruction that is driven by emotional alienation, psychological shame, and physical rage.<sup>21</sup> This war's major players represent and employ recognised formal religions with accountable structures of governance and public trust versus countless pagan systems of indigenous belief that benefit key stakeholders with unaccountable social control that masquerades as governance. Over the past three decades, I have participated in this ongoing war from a non-partisan conflict resolution perspective of intervention and have personally witnessed its destructive capacity. Western diplomatic missions and conventional military interventionists tend to carefully avoid any acknowledgement of this war outside of a political framework of internationally sanctioned violent extremist organisations that are not linked to, or reflective of, any civil population segment that is bounded by race, religion, ethnicity, or cultural construction.<sup>22</sup> The avoidance by national and international organisations of this ongoing ideological war, has allowed the perpetuation of many cultural practices that are sanctioned by the United Nations such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, witchcraft, prepubescent

<sup>21</sup> (Christian, 2018b)

<sup>22</sup> (Christian et al., 2017)



sexual activity, and social, physical, psychological, and emotional violent outplay in the pursuit of metaphysical belief systems. Police and courts in Burkina Faso serve a principal purpose of mediation, facilitation, and negotiation of justice between collectives that are equally represented by elders. Lone individuals who arrive seeking assistance and are disconnected from any one interest group are, by nature, guilty of their inability to maintain their placement within one of the accepted social groups who wield most of the internal social authority. From bitter experience, secular security, and legal institutions of a majority tribal country, find it best to leave internal social discipline matters to the recognised collectives. As Refugees found out when his protector from the Witch-Youth, Mr. Bendi, called the police, his expectations of reality not supported by them:

*“...when the police did arrive, I was happy ... I for sure thought that they were putting me in their car to take care of me, that they would keep me safe...be taken to the police station to help in the investigation and prosecution of the criminals who had beaten me. I couldn't have been more wrong...when I arrived at the police station, the police put me in their jail cell. I was very confused about what was happening, and I demanded an explanation, which I never received one.”<sup>23</sup>*

Based on my experiences in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali with police handling of domestic disputes, the police placed Refugees in a locked cell simply to keep him safe. As a minor, he did not even qualify as a head of a household. As a lone Christian evangelist, working to establish a religious base from the willing members of the tribal Animist and Muslim communities, the police likely considered him to be either mentally incompetent or a sociocultural troublemaker who could/would set the town in civil conflict if not stopped. If Refugees's attackers were a single lone person not acting on behalf of a community collective, the police would have investigated and prosecuted the offending individual. But the 'Witch-Youth' were protected members of an accepted collective in the community and Refugees was an outsider. When Yonli's family came to claim him and take responsibility for him, the police released him, uncharged as he had not broken any laws. The fact that Refugees was the victim was/is less important to the police than maintenance of the delicate tribal social orders balanced between tribal authority, religious beliefs, and national sovereignty. Refugees Diamano's educational escape from Burkina Faso likely saved his life for both his religious activism and because of his family's political ties.

**Rise of a Modern Republic of Volta/Burkina Faso.** On October 15, 1987, Captain Thomas Sankara, the appointed Prime Minister of the country formerly known as the Republic of Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso<sup>24</sup>, was assassinated in a coup which brought Captain Blaise Compaoré to power. PM Sankara was only in office for around four years, as a leftist revolutionary dedicated to an ambitious socioeconomic programme for change.<sup>25</sup> Captain Blaise Compaoré, a member of Sankara's government and his close friend, would serve for the next 28 years, until the military coup d'état that prevented Refugees Diamano from returning home, forced him and his Congress for Democracy and Progress Party (CDP) from office.<sup>26</sup> Many of PM Sankara and PM Compaoré's domestic policies rankled tribal authorities, but a decentralised execution of them served to temper resistance by the tribal and clan chiefs.<sup>27</sup> After the military unit that

<sup>23</sup> Quote drawn from Mr. Yonli's narrative submitted to USA DHS Immigration Department.

<sup>24</sup> The Republic of Volta was derived from the French colonial name for this region, the French Volta. PM Sankara convinced the legislative assembly to change the name to Burkina Faso. The name is an amalgam of More Burkina ("honest", "upright", or "incorruptible men") and Jula Faso ("homeland"; literally "father's house"). The "-be" suffix in the name for the people – Burkinabe – comes from the Fula (Fulani) plural suffix for people, -be.

<sup>25</sup> Captain Thomas Sankara's foreign policies were centred on anti-imperialism, his government denying all foreign aid, pushing for odious debt reduction, nationalising all land and mineral wealth, and ameliorating the power and influence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. His domestic policies included a nationwide literacy campaign, land redistribution to peasants, railway and road construction and the outlawing of female genital mutilation, forced marriages and polygamy. Sankara pushed for agrarian self-sufficiency and promoted public health by vaccinating 2,500,000 children against meningitis, yellow fever, and measles. His national agenda also included planting over 10,000,000 trees to halt the growing desertification of the Sahel. Sankara called on every village to build a medical dispensary and had over 350 communities building schools with their own labour.

<sup>26</sup> Blaise Compaoré actually abdicated his position on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2014, and members of his CDP party, Yacouba Isaac Zida, and Michel Kafando, served as interim PMs until September 2015, when the Presidential Security Regiment arrested Kafando and Zida in an attempted coup d'état.

<sup>27</sup> (Kandeh, 2004; Omar, 2007)



engineered the coup was disbanded and civil rule restored, the CDP was sanctioned, its assets frozen, and its members prevented from running in the 2015 General Election.

According to Refugees:

*"I focused on my studies while I was in the US, and they were being paid for by my country, however, on September 16, 2015, there was a coup d'état in my country, and it not only destabilize the government, and it not only caused me to lose my funding for my schools, but it made it impossible for me to be able to return to Burkina Faso because I could be killed by the government itself because of the family I am from. That at this point, my father's wife's brother had to help me by paying my university tuition, and because I am unable to work, I relied on that- but that would only help me out for one semester, and not because my family members didn't want to help me, but because the government put some of my family members in jail or persecuted them, including, my uncle Palamanga Ernest Yonli and my step-mother, Djibril Bassole, and even my own father, Mimboaba Yonli. My father's brother was put in jail because my father was the leader of the Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) Political Party in our village, Kindi Kombou, and my uncle, Palamanga Ernest Yonli, was also involved in the CDP."*<sup>28</sup>

The Coup that Refugees wrote about in his immigration statement ended one of the longest periods of stability in Burkina Faso and was driven by both internal and external issues that Blaise Compaoré was not able to overcome. The Army quelled the attempted coup, and the general elections of 2015 brought an entirely new political government to power in Burkina Faso. My research supports Refugees's assertion that his family members were jailed for the events that occurred between August of 2014 and November of 2015, however details were somewhat unclear from official reporting and the specific charges and court records were never released. All of the senior CDP leaders were banned from running for political office, and the CDPs share of the electorate and parliamentary seats declined from an 80% majority to a 13% minority. By 2018, Burkina Faso's economy improved, but the country remained "a poor, landlocked country that depends on adequate rainfall. Irregular patterns of rainfall, poor soil, and the lack of adequate communications and other infrastructure contribute to the economy's vulnerability to external shocks."<sup>29</sup> Burkina Faso's high population growth, recurring drought, pervasive and perennial food insecurity, and limited natural resources continued to result in poor economic prospects for most Burkinabè where 80% of the population is engaged in subsistence farming and cotton is the main cash crop. While the end of the political crisis has allowed Burkina Faso's economy to resume growth, the country's fragile security situation was unable to manage the growing influx of security related challenges from neighbouring Mali and Niger. Civil unrest continued to grow in Burkina Faso, driven by unrealised aspirations and largely, by extremist violent psychological warfare.<sup>30</sup> Ouagadougou experienced terrorist attacks in 2016, 2017, and 2018 and continues grapple with a rising tide of violent extremism spilling over from Niamey and Bamako. The attacks were largely from a broad spectrum of non-state organisations with regional and global operational franchises that employ extreme versions of religious rule as fronts for weaponizing civil populations against each other and against legitimate multi-ethnic/cultural governance.

**Collapse of governance and the rule of law in the tri-state Central Sahel of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.** During the first two decades after 9/11, a rising tide of opportunistic violent extremism began to break apart societies that had been achieving post-colonial gains. Personally, I worked in many of these societies, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Libya. Our success in stabilizing the various societies of these countries was opposed by state and non-state actors who worked to breakdown societies as fast as we worked to build them up and instil resilience. In order to fully understand the challenges facing Burkina Faso, its important to understand its troubled northern neighbours.

<sup>28</sup> Quote drawn from Mr. Yonli's narrative submitted to USA DHS Immigration Department.

<sup>29</sup> CIA Fact Book entry from 2018.

<sup>30</sup> (Mednick, 2023; Staff, 2023)





Figure 4 Graphic overlay of Coups d'états and Violent Extremist Organisations in the Central Sahel

**Mali.** In early 2012, the American Ambassador to Mali presented President Amadou Toumani Touré with the coveted Millenium Challenge Award for improved democratic and socioeconomic progress.

Several weeks later, in March, the Malian Army mutinied and overthrew the government, establishing a military dictatorship, stating that the government has not been able to stop the Tuareg rebellion in the northern reaches of the country. Eight years later, two additional military coups d'états have left Mali firmly in the throes of a military dictatorship, which forced the withdrawal of the UN, EU, AU, ECOWAS, USA, UK, and Canada from humanitarian, economic, and security partnerships working in support of the country's population and government.<sup>31</sup> The military coups and following withdrawal from the international community left the military junta with its preferred choice of support by the Russian Federation and its army-for-hire, the Wagner Group. The Mali Army, never having had success against the growing Jihadist violent extremists' movements and their armed forces, lost



Figure 3 Kel Tamashek (Tuareg) Homeland of Azawad

<sup>31</sup> The second Malian military coup ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on August 18, 2020, and was led by a 40-year-old Army Colonel named Assimi Goita. The ousted president was accused of failing to address the deteriorating security situation and of widespread corruption. Subsequent pressure from the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) forced the military junta to accept the formation of a transitional government led by civilians and retired officers, for a maximum of 12 months, as part of a plan to hold general elections. The military junta and international community accepted former defence minister, Colonel Bah Ndaw, as the new temporary head of state on September 25, 2020, but he quickly clashed with the military that maintained its influence over the country. Colonel Goita once again led another coup and ousted Ndaw because of disagreements over a cabinet reshuffle in which two military officers lost their positions. After the second coup, Goita became head of the transitional authority and head of state on May 28, 2021.

all its international support leaving Russia's Wagner Group as the sole support to battle a collection of violent jihadist extremist groups dedicated to the dismantling of the international order of political states. The most militarily powerful population segment in Mali's northern regions of the Azawad Valley, is the Kel Tamashek, commonly known as the Tuareg. They had banked its hopes for democracy and a liberalisation of power sharing on President Barzoum, has now abandoned their alignment with the government against the violent extremists' organisations.

**Niger.** In Niger, for the first time, a member of the northern, non-African tribes won the 2021 presidential election. Mahamad Bazoum, a prominent Arab from Niger's northeast province, was elected president of a majority African country. His support ranged from his centrist political party and swept the northern regions' votes from Arab, Tuareg, Toubou, and Fulani. His reign ended only two years into his term when his presidential guard commander General



Abdourahmane Tchiani with support from Niger's largely African officer corps arrested him and seized power. Mr. Bazoum was a progressive and advocate of modernisation programs that linked Niger with the rest of the modern world. He promoted girls' education, sought to reduce Niger's birthrate, the highest in the world, and oversaw an impressive economic revival. After years of stagnation, Niger's economy had been forecast to grow 7 percent this year. The United States maintains a critical sub-base in the countries eastern part of Azawad, the Tuareg homeland centred between Timbuktu and the Mountains of the Nobles in Mali to Agadez and

the Air Massif in Niger.<sup>32</sup> The Tuareg (Kel Tamashek) of northern Mali and northern Niger have begun to coalesce around the Valley of Azawad, inching towards a unilateral declaration of independence. Underneath the Valley of Azawad, lies vast reserves of water, Uranium, natural gas, and oil deposits, accounting for most of Niger and Mali's wealth. The stakes and corresponding likelihood for a regional war have never been higher. None of these dynamics have been lost on the leaders of the two states common southern neighbour, Burkina Faso.

**Burkina Faso.** After the downfall of the Congress for Democracy and Progress, Refugees's family political party, Mali's political situation continued to deteriorate from internal unresolved social pressure (*modernising globalisation influences of the urban centres versus traditional social power of the rest of the country*) and external security pressures. Five years after the CDP's majority rule ended, Burkina Faso suffered two back-to-back coups, in 2020 and 2021. In January 2022, a 41-year-old Army Lieutenant Colonel named Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba detained President-elect Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, holding him responsible for the failure in confronting the jihadist insurgent movements in the country, and formed a military council under his command. But this military junta soon lost territory to the same insurgents and Sandaogo Damiba was removed from power in another coup by 34-year-old Captain Ibrahim Traoré.<sup>33</sup> Burkina Faso has suffered through decades of corrupt and oppressive military rule, and yet it witnessed one of the strongest popular movements demanding democracy in the Sahel region. Captain Traoré's populist support and young age harkens back to the days of Captains Sankara and Compaoré, but his ability to secure

Figure 5 At the funeral of 27 Burkina Faso soldiers killed by jihadists, in Ouagadougou, October 8, 2022.



Burkina Faso's borders is no better than the elected president that he helped to overthrow.

**Burkina Faso Country of Origin Security Conditions.** Military Junta leader, Captain Ibrahim Traore, promised to stop the violence and return security, but the government only controls less than 50% of the country with much of the rural areas coming under the control of the Jihadists or are in open contest with government forces. Analysts such as Rida Lyammouri<sup>34</sup>, believe that Burkina Faso's security forces don't have the resources (human and equipment) to fight both groups at all fronts, especially now that

<sup>32</sup> My reporting on these aspects of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are from my direct experiences managing American and Allied Special Operations Forces on the ground in 2013, 2014, 2015 for United States Africa Command's Special Operations Command.

<sup>33</sup> (Staff, 2023)

<sup>34</sup> Rida Lyammouri is a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South, a Morocco-based think tank.



## reliefweb Burkina Faso - Escalation of violence and increased fighting

- On 26 June 2023, a supply convoy escorted by military units was attacked in Namsiguia in Centre North region on its way back from Djibo, a city under blockade for more than a year. The violent fighting caused the death of at least 31 military and 3 "Volontaires de la Patrie" (army civilian auxiliaries).
- The proliferation of such attacks and of areas under blockade in the regions Sahel, Nord and East requires particular attention as they imply a total or partial suspension of movements and supplies to resident populations.
- UN OCHA estimates that up to 1.8 million people live in localities under blockade. For these localities, the costly transport of vital assistance by air - helicopter or air drop- is often the only solution until access by road is safely restored.

they have abandoned all western security assistance.<sup>35</sup> The graphics in figure 7 are courtesy of the US Department of Defence's Africa Center for Strategic Studies at Fort McNair, in Washington DC. The lower graph in purple illustrates a year's worth of militant Islamist group events and fatalities prior to the first Burkina Faso coup d'état. The upper graph in red illustrates Islamist militants attacks the year after the first coup. Not only did the presence of Ansaroul Islam, Islamic State, and Jamaat Nasrallah in the Maghreb increase in numbers, but their reach deepened southward towards Benin, Togo, and Ghana in the east and southwards towards Cote D'Ivoire in the west.<sup>36</sup> The various Jihad collectives of

JNIM and Islamic State have been successful in gaining control of populations and resources, by blocking towns, preventing people from moving freely and goods from flowing in. Aid groups informally report that, by their calculations, some 800,000 people in more than 20 towns are under siege. The military junta either refuses to release objective information or deny the situation is as bad as civilians and NGOs are reporting. One resident, a 53-year-old woman named Bibata Sangli, fled her town of Pama, south of Mr. Yonli's home in Kindi Kombou from Jihadists in early January 2022, leaving behind many of her family who were not able to escape. According to Ms. Sangli, *"The situation is very difficult...people don't have food...children don't have school."*<sup>37</sup> Yet other refugees report that the senior Islamic State leader in Burkina Faso, Jafar Dicko, has directed that towns that don't accept its rules, such as banning alcohol and requiring women to be veiled their faces, will be blockaded. Beyond the immediate physical threat posed by the Jihadists organisations, the government's response has become equally as dire to the population they are trying to protect. Since the military takeovers of Burkina Faso's government began in January 2022, incidents against aid organizations perpetrated by the security forces increased from one in 2021 to eleven in 2022.<sup>38</sup> The incidents included workers being arrested, detained, and injured. In November of 2022, security forces killed a humanitarian worker with a Burkina Faso aid organization in the Sahel region, the vast expanse below the Sahara Desert.<sup>39</sup> Rights groups, analysts and civilians say Traore, the junta leader, is only focused on achieving military gains and cares little about human rights, freedom of speech or holding people accountable for indiscriminate killings of individuals suspected of supporting the militants. Burkina Faso's security forces killed at least 150 civilians in the north in April, according to residents from the village of Karma, where most of the violence took place.<sup>40</sup> Prosecutors said they opened an investigation into the killings. Earlier this year, an Associated Press investigation into a video circulating on social media determined that Burkina Faso's security forces killed children at a military base in the country's north.<sup>41</sup> While the government wages war, civilians bear the brunt and are running out of hope. After jihadis attacked his village in eastern Burkina Faso in April, killing people and stealing cattle, a father of five, who did not want to be identified for security reasons, fled to the region's main town of Fada N'Gourma. But now his family doesn't have food or access to health care, and the assistance supplied by humanitarian groups isn't enough, he said. *"Since we've been displaced, our situation keeps getting worse,"* the 46-year-old man said. *"I miss my home."*<sup>42</sup> Another 60 civilians were killed on or around April 21<sup>st</sup> of 2023 in northern Burkina Faso by people wearing the uniforms of the Burkinabè armed forces, reported by a local prosecutor, Lamine Kabore, saying that he received information to begin an investigation from police in the town of Ouahigouya. He said an investigation had been launched after the attack on the village of Karma in Yatenga province in

<sup>35</sup> (Mednick, 2023)

<sup>36</sup> (ReliefWeb Staff, 2023)

<sup>37</sup> (Mednick, 2023)

<sup>38</sup> From unpublished data for aid groups that was briefed to US Special Operations Command Africa.

<sup>39</sup> Source is a text message sent to an aid worker WhatsApp group that included my field researcher in Tilliberry.

<sup>40</sup> The villagers were interviewed in refugee camps as their village is now a denied area.

<sup>41</sup> (Mednick, 2023)

<sup>42</sup> (Mednick, 2023; Staff, 2023)

the borderlands near Mali, an area overrun by Islamist groups linked to al Qaeda and Islamic State that have carried out repeated attacks for years. Since 2022, attacks by armed groups on civilians have surged while state security forces and volunteer defence troops have conducted some number of abusive counter-terrorism operations.<sup>43</sup>

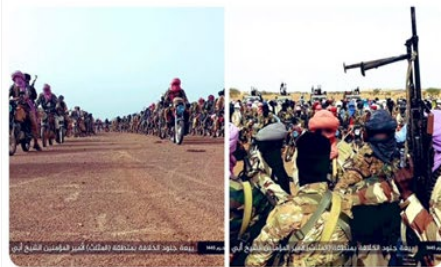
**Alliance of Sahel States (AES) & the Liptako Gourma Charter.** The Liptako-Gourma Charter signed by ministerial military delegations of the three coup states, is the treaty that establishes the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). The treaty was drafted and signed by Mali's junta leader Colonel Assimi Goita, Niger's junta leader General Abdourahmane

Tchiani, and Burkina Faso's junta leader, Captain Ibrahim Traoré. The Liptako-Gourma region is where the Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger borders meet and has been ravaged by jihadism in recent years. The West African regional bloc ECOWAS has threatened to intervene militarily against the three coup leaders, who responded with a mutual defence pact, stating that an attack on any one of them would be an attack on all of them. The charter also commits Burkina Faso to become involved in potential armed rebellions in Niger and Mali's northern regions of greater Azawad, the Tuareg homeland. The Kel Tamashek/Tuareg famously rebelled repeatedly against the French in Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Algeria, and Libya during their colonial rule and were never successfully defeated. After independence, only Algeria was able to arrive at a mutual accommodation with their Tuareg collectives located around the Hoggar Massif and the city of Tamanrasset. In the lower Azawad of Niger and Mali, the Tuareg have rebelled and overthrown their oppressive African governments beginning after independence in 1962 to 1964, in 1990 to 1995, in 2007 to 2009, and finally, in Mali, in 2012, which led to that military coup. In the

northern reaches of Mali and Niger, only the Tuareg defended areas of Azawad are free from constant Jihadist presence and attacks. Although bitter enemies, the Jihadist collectives have never been successful in combat against the Tuareg and prefer the easier-to-defeat African communities to the south. Figure 6 illustrates the declining situation in the Central Sahel regions of Bamako Mali, Niamey Niger, and Ouagadougou Burkina Faso. The screenshots of messaging from Tuareg Amenokal Moussa AG Acharatoumane warn the tri-state Tuareg confederations of tribes that the Jihadist threat is growing because the Russian Wagner Group advisors are prescribing a 'scorched earth' policy of combatting the jihadist threat.<sup>44</sup>

Moussa AG Acharatoumane  
@Mossa\_ag

#DAESH: contrairement à #Bamako et #Ouaga, #Niamey est la capitale la plus exposée au Sahel, à quelques km des bases terroristes. Elle peut sombrer plus vite qu'on ne l'imagine. #Daesh est aux portes de cette ville, il faut se réveiller à temps. Urgent pour tous les Nigériens



21:50 · 16/08/2023 depuis Earth · 86 vues

Wassim Nasr  
@SimNasr

#Niger exécution d'un militaire à proximité de #Tera par l' #EI #Sahel



21:19 · 29 août 23 · 392 Vues



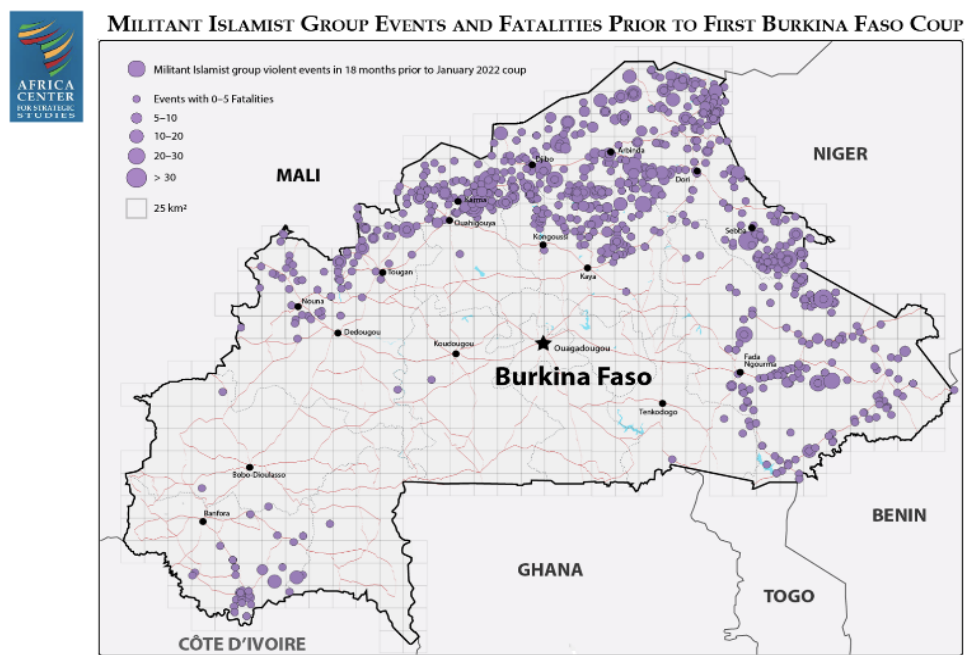
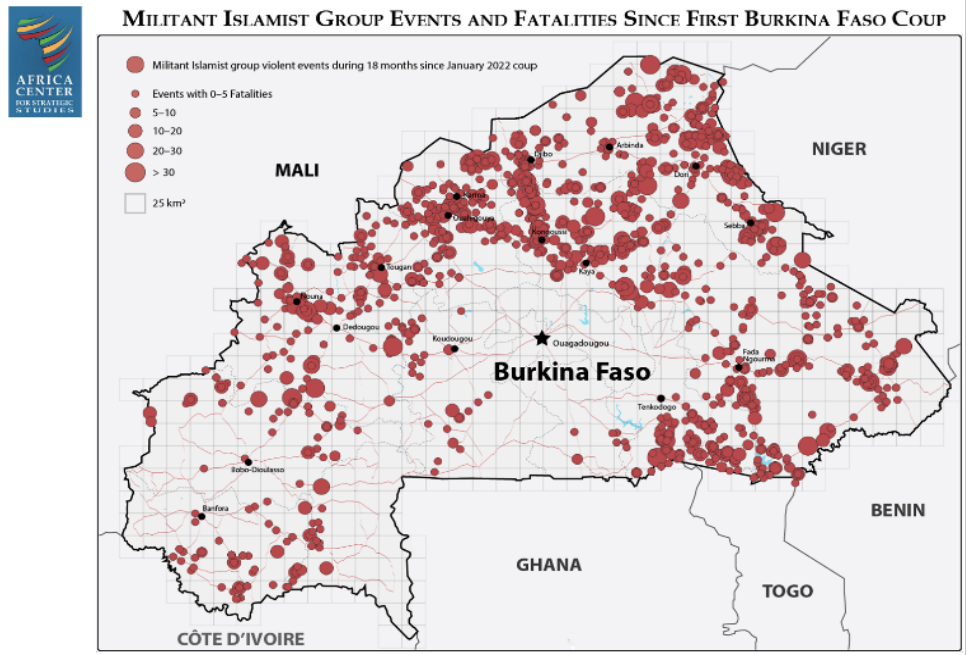
Figure 6 Collage of screenshots from the Central Sahel of Tuareg warnings and images of the rapid progress of the violent jihadi extremist groups and their expansion since the coup d'états.

<sup>43</sup> (Human Rights Watch Staff, 2023)

<sup>44</sup> Photos and Telegram Messages in Figure 5 are courtesy of Valka-Mir field researcher, Mr. Aghali Hamidou.

Unfortunately for the civilian population, the poorly trained and advised African armies of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are not able to distinguish between innocent civilians and jihadists. As the death toll rises, the Jihadist organisations find it increasingly easy to obtain recruits mentally traumatised by the senseless violence perpetrated by the government. More than 210 people have been killed in terrorist attacks in Niger since General Abdourahamane Tchiani's coup d'état in Niamey on July 26, 2023. Over 4,100 people have been killed in Burkina Faso since Captain Ibrahim Traoré's own coup d'état in Ouagadougou in September 2022. And almost 5,000 people have been killed in Mali since the coup d'état in May 2021 that brought Colonel Assimi Goïta to power. The graphs in figure 7 illustrate the rapid increase in access and control of Burkina Faso's territory since the coup a little more than a year ago. The graphic aid in figure 8 illustrate the physical deaths and injuries of civilians from security forces employing high volume lethality as they attempt to suppress the VEOs. In addition to fighting jihadist organisations flowing down from the north, the military regimes in Niamey, Bamako, and Ouagadougou have seen a resumption of hostilities by separatist Tuareg militias since the coup d'états, who have begun to restrict government forces entrance into their homelands.

Figure 5 Burkina Faso Coup Sept 2022: Before and After coup d'état graphs of Jihadi VEO attacks



**The Coming Threat to Burkina Faso.** The principal armed non-state actors seeking legitimacy are the coalesced collection of Jihadist violent extremist organisations shown in Figure 3, and the armed successionist Kel Tamashek are shown in Figure 4. The Kel Tamashek armed militias include *Mouvement pour le Salut de l'Azawad* (MSA), and *Groupe d'Autodéfense Tuareg Imghad et Alliés* (GATIA). They have the capacity to restrict both Jihadists and Government forces from their home areas of Azawad, which pushes the conflict ever southward. The Russian Wagner Group continues to push their government advisees to the north, because that is where the natural resources lie - under the Tuareg's Azawad. The Kel Tamashek in Mali signed a peace accord with Bamako after the 2012 rebellion and the Kel Tamashek in Niger signed an accord with

Figure 6 Graphic of attacks 2021 to mid-year 2023

Niamey in 2009 and renewed their plan with President Barzoum before he was overthrown. The Kel Tamashek in both countries now consider those accords to be breached by the series of coup d'états and have begun working to unify their tribes in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso in preparation for reclaiming their Azawad homeland. While the Tuareg are nationalists interested in establishing an orderly society in the Central Sahel that is integrated into the globalised world, the jihadists on the other hand work to breakdown the modern state and dissolve all western style institutions in favour of recreating versions of Islamic oriented "Theocratic-Kleptocracies" based on extreme violent rule similar to what the Taliban, Islamic State, Boko Haram, and Al Shabaab have created or are trying to create. Violent events linked to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel— Burkina Faso, Mali, and western Niger—have surged nearly sevenfold since 2017. With thousands of violent episodes reported annually in an increasing arc. The Sahel experienced the largest increase in violent extremist activity of any region in Africa during the periods of 2017 through 2023. With fatalities numbering in the tens of thousands, millions of people displaced, government officials and traditional leaders targeted, thousands of schools closed, and economic activity

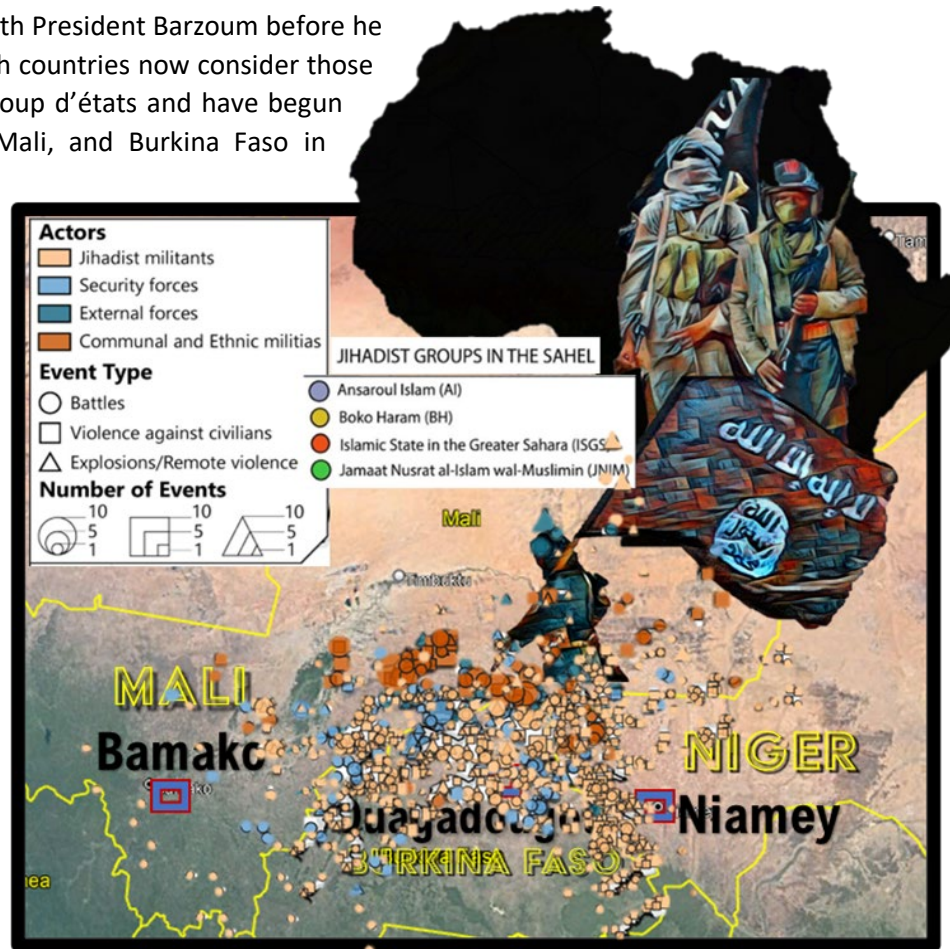
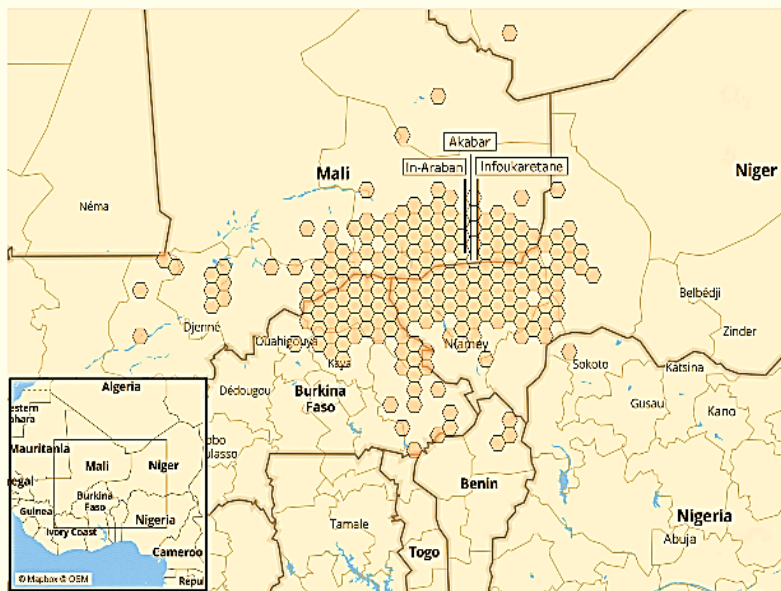


Figure 7 graphic aid showing the growing movement of Islamic State operations in Burkina Faso

severely curtailed, the Sahel is staggering from the surge of attacks that have only worsened dramatically with the loss of legitimate governance.

**Areas of Operations of IS Sahel (September 2016 - December 2022)**



**Ansaroul Islam JVEO:** This group began as a localised insurgency in the northern provinces of Burkina Faso, under the leadership of Malam Ibrahim Dicko. Dicko was a Peul commander linked to Ansar al-Din who was arrested by French forces in Mali in 2015 and then later released. The group's first attack against Burkinabe forces was in December 2016, when they killed 12 gendarmes in Nassoumbou. The insurgency has quickly expanded since then. Today, Ansarul Islam is composed largely of Peul fighters, and it conducts attacks across northern and eastern Burkina Faso, as well as operating on the other side of the Malian border. It is believed to be in close contact with members of Katibat Macina as well as Almansour



Ag Alkassoum (before his death) and his fighters. It also operates increasingly along Burkina Faso's border with Niger. When Malam Dicko died in 2017, he was replaced by his brother, Jafar Dicko, as leader.

**Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM):** The JNIM coalition originally comprised four al Qaeda-linked militant Islamist groups in the Sahel—Ansar Dine, FLM, al Mourabitoun, and the Sahara Emirate of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM Sahara). The composition of the groups is noteworthy in that the

respective leaders represented Tuareg, Fulani, and Arab jihadists from the Sahel and Maghreb. This breadth of ethnic and geographic representation has created the illusion of a united group with expanding influence. In practice however, each of these component groups have their own shifting interests, territorial influence, and motivations. JNIM operations and presence stretches from northern Mali to southeastern Burkina Faso. Its violent attacks are thought to comprise more than 64 percent of all episodes linked to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel since 2017. JNIM does not necessarily have a single headquarters, operational hierarchy, or group of fighters that can be directly targeted by government security forces. Yet, with nearly two-thirds of the violence in the Sahel attributed to it, targeting JNIM is the equivalent of shadow boxing.

**Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS):** This local branch of the Islamic State group (ISIS) was at first self-proclaimed, the outgrowth of a schism within MUJAO. The group's leader, the former MUJAO commander Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui, declared his adherence to the Islamic State in May 2015, although ISIS only recognised the pledge of allegiance (bay'a) to its leader Abubakr al-Baghdadi in October 2016. ISGS began receiving regular attention from formal ISIS media outlets in spring 2019. The group operated first in western Niger and Ménaka, in north-eastern Mali, while also conducting several attacks in Burkina Faso near the border with Mali and an attack on a high-security prison near Niger's capital Niamey in October 2016. ISGS fighters fought a battle in June 2015 with al-Mourabitoun fighters loyal to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, but subsequently the groups have avoided clashes. At times, ISGS has operated in proximity – and possibly even cooperation – with fighters from JNIM. According to interviews with local observers as well as regional and international sources, ISGS has drawn many of its fighters from those native to the areas in which it operates, especially Nigerien Peul as well as Dawsahak fighters whose origins are in Ménaka and the Malian city of Gao. ISGS fighters were responsible for the deadly attack that killed four American soldiers and five Nigerien soldiers at Tongo Tongo in the province of Tillabéry, as well as dozens of attacks against Nigerien, Malian, and Burkinabe troops, militias like the *Mouvement pour le Salut de l'Azawad* (MSA), and *Groupe d'Autodéfense Tuareg Imghad et Alliés* (GATIA). It has in recent months expanded its territorial operations along the Niger-Burkina Faso border, as well as into the Gourma region south of Timbuktu in Mali.<sup>45</sup>



**Burkina: Terrorists killed in the Center-North and the Sahel**

**Ouagadougou . October 18, 2023 (AIB) - Several terrorists were killed on Wednesday in Zoura (North-Central) and Sikgadji (Sahel), in strikes by the Burkinabè army, we learned.**

Around sixty terrorists perched on motorcycles launched an assault on Wednesday October 18, 2023, against a VDP position in Sian in the Center-North. The brave volunteers put up fierce resistance, forcing the enemy to flee. Aerial vectors will then chase them, as far as Zoura where the criminals will camouflage themselves under large trees. Through precise strikes, many terrorists will be killed. The survivors fled towards Inata to take refuge in a grove which served as their base. They were also killed by the strikes. The same day, air vectors saw other terrorists meeting in Silgadji (Soum, Sahel), under a tree in an abandoned hamlet. These criminals died under bombs dropped by air carriers. Security operations continue various fronts, the AIB also learned. Burkina Faso Information Agency (AIB)

<sup>45</sup> (Crisis Group Staff Report No 266 - Africa, 2018)  
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**Conclusion: The Future of Human Security in Burkina Faso under Rogue governance by an outlaw regime.** The psychosocial and physical health of the families, clans, and tribes in Burkina Faso are under serious threat from the breakdown in government, security, and accompanying political-economic isolation resulting from the military overthrow of the government. The alignment of Burkina Faso's military junta with Russian Wagner mercenaries directly impacted the way kinetic force is used as a means of resolving domestic interpersonal and cultural/religious/ethnic conflict. The graphic in figure 8 illustrates how Burkina Faso's military forces have added to the number of deaths and injuries of the civilian population because of their over reliance on kinetic, lethal force, at the behest of the Russian Wagner mercenary advisors. From the perspective of a violent extremist organisational leader, the overthrow of a legitimately elected government and the indiscriminate use of lethality to purge infections of mental extremism and corresponding behavioural radicalisation and violence, creates the perfect conditions for recruitment. In the graphic in figure 10, Burkina Faso's officer corps much prefers this type of method to acting against VEO Jihadists attacking the country. The problem is that the Jihadists are never where they are supposed to be and they always operate as close to or inside of, the civilian population so that any government strike will invariably kill and maim innocents, whose bereft survivors swell the ranks of the insurgent fighters out of violence induced trauma. The expanding VEO Jihadist conflict combined with the pending civil war in the northern regions of Burkina Faso's neighbouring juntas will ensure that ever greater violence moves into all parts of the country.

I, Patrick James Christian, confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.

23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2023

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