

Causes of Internal Displacement and Forced Migration in Burkina Faso

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Introduction

The internal displacement crisis within Burkina Faso is among the most neglected crises in the world. Very few outside the region are aware of the millions of people that have been displaced, leaving the refugees and IDPs extremely vulnerable and without support. Burkina Faso has a very tumultuous history, yet the past decade has been particularly unstable and violent, resulting in increased numbers of those forced to flee and contributing to a larger refugee crisis in the Sahel. In order to make sense of such displacement, one must consider a myriad of factors and how they impact and exacerbate one another.

As it stands, displacement in Burkina Faso tops 1.5 million internally displaced persons, or IDPs (UN 2022). Some estimates place this number at around 1.6 to 1.8 million IDPs, the majority of which have been displaced by conflict in recent months and years (IDMC 2021). This breaks down to around 1 in 10 Burkinabé displaced, almost 900,000 of which are children (ReliefWeb 2022, ECHO 2022). Between January and August of 2022, 455,000 people were newly displaced (ECHO 2022). This paper seeks to create a comprehensive study of the factors driving mass displacement in Burkina Faso and elucidate the crisis to better understand what causes displacement crises like these.

The current crisis in Burkina Faso is the culmination of several factors, all of which have been intensifying over the past decade. This paper will explore the origins of the crisis beginning with the 2014 coup and how the subsequent events have resulted in a mass exodus of Burkinabé from their homes. After the 2014 coup, a series of terrorist attacks began to deteriorate the country's security, which in turn weakened the government's position to hold power. At the same time, the effects of climate change heightened in the Sahel, devastating farmland and drying up resources. A convergence of political instability, terrorism, and climate change has forced

millions to flee within the region, yet the specific conditions within Burkina Faso are worth studying and bringing attention to.

Background and Historical Context

Burkina Faso is a country that rarely appears in the news or in classrooms, and thus an introduction to the country will lay the necessary groundwork for understanding the situation. Burkina Faso is a West African country in the Sahel region of Africa. “Sahel” is the Arabic word for “border,” as the region makes up the border zone between the Sahara desert to the north and the tropics to the south (Tesfaye 2022, 1). Burkina Faso is landlocked, bordered by Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Niger. It has a population of 21.5 million people, and its capital is Ouagadougou (World Bank). Its official language is French and the majority of its citizens are Sunni Islam. Burkina Faso’s government is structured in a semi-presidential republic, though the frequency of coups, especially in 2022, have destabilized the system to great effect.

Burkina Faso has consistently ranked in the low human development category on the Human Development Index, or HDI, a measure from the United Nations Development Programme to determine countries’ achievement in human development. The dimensions of human development, as defined by the HDI, are “a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living” (UNDP). Burkina Faso ranks 185th of 191 countries in the 2021 HDI report, with the following metrics: HDI value at 0.449, life expectancy at birth at 59.3 years, expected years of schooling at 9.1 years, mean years of schooling at 2.1 years, and GNI per capita at \$2,118 (HDI 2021). Similarly, the World Bank measures Burkina Faso’s success in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, and the country has ranked low in many categories. As of 2020, only 19 percent of the population has access to electricity, the youth literacy rate was 59 percent, and over 40 percent of the population lived below the poverty

line (World Bank). These numbers do not account for devastating events from the past year, which have most likely worsened quality of life for many Burkinabé.

To properly understand the crisis that ensued following the 2014 coup, it helps to be familiar with a brief history of Burkina Faso leading up to current events. In 1896, the lands and kingdoms that make up present-day Burkina Faso were unified into a French protectorate named Upper Volta. Upper Volta remained under French control until its colonial independence in 1960 (BBC 2022). Power struggles and coups plagued the country following independence, but in 1983 a young Marxist revolutionary named Thomas Sankara won the Burkinabé presidency. His ideas of pan-Africanism swept across the African continent, as he “[spoke] out against the vestiges of colonialism and the impact of Western financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund” (Maclean 2021). In 1984, Sankara, now referred to as the Che Guevara of Africa, renamed the country Burkina Faso, which means “the land of upright people” in Moore, the language of the country’s largest ethnic group (Maclean 2021). Though Sankara implemented land redistribution, expanded education and healthcare, and championed social reform, his reign was also plagued with human rights violations and political repression (Maclean 2021). Just four years after Sankara became president, he was assassinated in a coup led by Blaise Compaoré, one of his close associates. Compaoré proceeded to stay in power as president for twenty seven years, until he was deposed by the Burkinabé people in 2014.

Burkina Faso’s political and social history has been fraught since its independence, yet it is within the past ten years that conditions have worsened and culminated in the refugee and IDP crisis the country is dealing with today. The history leading up to the 2014 deposition of Compaoré is chaotic and unstable, yet it is the events that occur after which snowball into an

internal displacement crisis that makes Burkina Faso one of the most neglected yet important refugee crises in the world.

Literature Review

The crisis in Burkina Faso is ongoing, with more people displaced every day due to political shifts and fragility. In order to make sense of the displacement, a compilation of resources, statistics, and academic works is necessary to piece together a coherent argument of what is causing such mass movement. The literature that currently exists on this topic is extremely valuable, but has yet to be synthesized into a single work, which is what this paper aims to accomplish. Below is a discussion of the academic literature that currently exists covering the multiple crises in Burkina Faso.

In an analysis of the increase in terrorist activity in Burkina Faso, the research article “The Global Terrorist Threat in the Sahel and the Origins of Terrorism in Burkina Faso” by Issaev, Korotayev, and Bobarykina, explains the increase in Islamic terrorism following the 2014 revolution. It ties the ousting of Compaore to the increased violence, which this paper subsequently links to the displacement crisis. Likewise, two articles from Méryl Demuynck, “Civilians on the Front Lines of (Counter-) Terrorism: Lessons from the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland in Burkina Faso” and “Political Upheaval and Counter-Terrorism in Burkina Faso: Between a Rock and a Hard Place” further elucidate the problem of terrorism on political stability and the government’s attempts and failures to quell the violence. Demuynck covers the VDP program in Burkina Faso and how government-funded grassroots attempts at counter-terrorism have had the unintended consequence of exacerbating violence. All of this information serves as both a cause of displacement and subtext for the 2022 coups.

An analysis from the Norwegian Refugee Council “Sahel: The world’s most neglected and conflict-ridden region” by Richard Skretteberg gives larger context for the situation of Burkina Faso by discussing the problem in the Sahel as a whole. Skretteberg synthesizes data from several Sahel countries and alludes to the interconnectedness of the refugee crisis to climate change. Moreover on climate change, in a study from the Council on Foreign Relations, “Climate Change and Conflict in the Sahel,” author Beza Tesfaye discusses the idea that climate change is a “threat multiplier” (Tefaye 2022, 2) and can actually increase violence in the Sahel.

Though there is not yet academic literature regarding the second coup of 2022, Bettina Engels covers the first coup that occurred in January in her journal article “Transition now? Another coup d’état in Burkina Faso.” This article tracks the political instability in Burkina Faso within the past year by placing it in the greater context of instability in the country’s history. She also discusses the recency of the 2014 revolution and provides a timeline of political instability within Burkina Faso to reveal patterns in its coups. Lastly, in a contemporary analysis of the effect of Covid-19 on IDPs, Ozer, Dembele, Yameogo, Hut, and Longueville study the IDP population in Kongoussi, Burkina Faso in their article “The impact of Covid-19 on the living and survival conditions of internally displaced persons in Burkina Faso.” Their research helps elucidate the reality of conditions for IDPs in the post-pandemic world.

As the literature stands, the discussion on the contemporary situation in Burkina Faso must proceed in synthesis and explanation for how all of these separate factors come together, and what they mean in relation to the displacement crisis. The limitations of the existing literature are that each study is concentrated in specific sectors, studying only one aspect of instability in Burkina Faso without making larger connections. While the previous literature

serves as a launching point, this paper will identify and unify the causes for displacement in one study.

Theory and Elaboration of Questions

The central research questions this paper seeks to answer are as follows: what is driving displacement in Burkina Faso? What are the compounding factors that have led to this crisis? How do these factors exacerbate each other? Primarily: how did the country get here? The main theory of this paper is that the internal displacement and forced migration crisis in Burkina Faso is caused by political instability, Islamic terrorism, and climate change. An assessment of the state of these factors and their origins will illuminate their effects on forced migration and displacement and create a holistic study of the crisis in Burkina Faso.

Research and Methodology

A synthesis of primary sources, statistics and empirical data, academic articles, news articles, and press releases all serve a different purpose in creating a basis of research that is both reliable, local, and current. In such a quickly evolving crisis, a variety of sources is required to explain both the history, context, and current situation of displacement. In general, the findings of this paper will be organized in a way that is both thematic and chronological; it will follow the emergence of the crisis from 2014 onwards, but sections will be arranged to delineate political instability, terrorism, and climate change from each other to explain each part's connection to displacement in depth.

The primary sources this paper uses regarding the current crisis in Burkina Faso are largely in the form of statistics from multilateral organizations and international organizations. Information from the World Bank, United Nations (UNDP, UNICEF, ReliefWeb), World Food Programme, Human Rights Watch, Fragile States Index, Global Terrorism Database, and the

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre are valuable sources of quantitative data which demonstrate the empirical side of the crisis in Burkina Faso. Metrics such as poverty rates, food insecurity percentages, fatalities from terrorist attacks, and displacement populations provide a window into the reality of the situation while also specifying context upon which further conclusions can be drawn. These organizations also tend to do the bulk of on-the-ground work in these fragile countries, which lends credence to their findings and data collection.

Regional websites also offer valuable current information on the developing situation in the Sahel. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies provides a statistical investigation of African Islamist militant groups and their terrorist activities, producing maps which track terrorist attacks across the continent and which groups are affiliated with such attacks. The Agence D'Information du Burkina, or AIB, is Burkina Faso's news agency, and it, along with Burkina Faso's government website, is host to state press releases and government statements. These primary sources are incredibly valuable in the case of Burkina Faso, given how current and evolving the crisis is. Although it is helpful to understand what information is coming out of the government, these sources also tend to be highly biased as the current government, which gained its power through a military coup, seeks to legitimize itself through use of propaganda.

Finally, this paper relies on a few articles from popular news outlets in order to capitalize on the availability of recent news coming out of Burkina Faso. These types of sources provide insight into smaller scale events and contemporary reactions to them, which is helpful when studying very recent events.

Findings

This paper finds that the displacement crisis in Burkina Faso is the culmination of several destabilizing events and factors. A deep analysis of the political instability in both 2014 and

2022, the rise in Islamic terrorism, failure of state solutions, and the impacts of climate change and food insecurity in the Sahel will shed light on the mass exodus of Burkinabé from their homes.

I. Political Instability - 2014 Revolution / Coup

The origins of the contemporary crisis facing Burkina Faso can be traced to the 2014 revolution. President Blaise Compaoré, who came to power in the 1987 coup which ousted and killed former President Thomas Sankara, ruled Burkina Faso in a semi-authoritarian system for twenty seven years until uprisings in 2014 toppled his government. Compaoré's presidency had survived six previous violent demonstrations, including in both 1999 and 2011 (Taoko et al. 2014). When he first took power in 1987, Burkina Faso was one of the poorest countries in Africa, and under his rule it has not improved, with "widespread illiteracy and no large, educated middle class" (Taoko et al. 2014). In October and November of 2014, demonstrators took to the streets in Ouagadougou and other major cities to protest Compaoré's attempt to amend the constitution in order to eliminate presidential term limits (Hagberg 2015, 114). General discontent with his presidency and frustration at the lack of democracy brought the Burkinabé people out to the streets in droves. The protests were backed largely by trade unions, students, and ultimately the military, who forced Compaoré to resign (Engels 2022, 319).

Once Compaoré officially stepped down on October 31, 2014, a transitional government, headed by the military, took charge. Elections were scheduled for the following year, October 2015 (Engels 2022, 319). Before they could take place, members of Compaoré's former security forces, the Regiment de Sécurité Présidentielle, or RSP, led a coup attempt in September of 2015. The Burkinabé citizens united in rejection of the coup, and their "resistance and struggle resulted in the coup's failure" (Hagberg 2015, 110). Presidential elections took place on November 29,

2015, and Roch Marc Christian Kaboré won in a free and fair election (Engels 2022, 320).

Kaboré would go on to be reelected in 2020 to another five year term, thereby remaining the only elected president before another set of coups.

II. Rise in Islamic Terrorism and Violence

Following the deposition of Compaoré, Burkina Faso's security situation began to deteriorate. Compaoré and the RSP ran an intelligence apparatus that was heavily involved in counter-terrorism. Once Compaoré was ousted from power and the RSP was disbanded following its coup attempt in September 2015, Burkina Faso lost its former protection against terrorist groups (Bobarykina 2022, 418). Similarly, Compaoré worked closely with the West in its counter-terrorism operations in Africa; France, Burkina Faso's former colonial ruler, regarded Compaoré as a "crucial ally in its efforts to confront Islamic militants in the broader Sahel region," (Taoko et al. 2014) and an "indispensable regional mediator" for both France and the U.S.' counter-terrorism efforts in Africa (Fessy 2014). In addition, Compaoré and his top advisors formed "unique" relationships with regional terrorist groups, making direct contact with them through informal ties and agreements (Bobarykina 2022, 419). Once Compaoré was out of the picture, terrorist groups that were already proliferating in neighboring Mali seized on the opportunity to begin operations in Burkina Faso.

The onset of the Arab Spring initially paved the way for terrorist groups to begin operations in North and West Africa in 2011. The regional instability and proliferation of weapons spurred by the Arab Spring created fertile ground for regional affiliates of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, especially as strong-man dictators were ousted, creating political power vacuums (Bobarykina 2022, 418). These groups moved into Burkina Faso in 2015, and made their presence known through increasingly frequent and violent attacks. The conditions in

Burkina Faso, and the Sahel more broadly, made the country susceptible to the expansion of extremist groups. Extremists exploited “longstanding grievances against a largely absent central state,” “perceptions of corruption,” and “social divides and intercommunal tensions” within the country following Compaoré’s deposition (Demuyneck 2021, 3). The main groups operating in Burkina Faso and committing attacks are as follows: coalition of Jama’at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin, or JNIM, which includes the Masina Liberation Front, or MLF, and Ansar-ul-Islam; Islamic State in the Greater Sahara; and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM (Bobarykina 2022, 416; Africa Center 2020). According to the Global Terrorism Database, armed assault is the most common type of attack in Burkina Faso, constituting around half of all attacks. The majority of targets are civilians and their property, followed by the military and police (GTD). There were 516 violent attacks in Burkina Faso in 2020 alone (Africa Center 2020). Since 2017, there have been reports of around 120 attacks on schools, and almost 2,500 schools have been forced to close since the outset of the violence (Engels 2022, 316).

One of the worst attacks on civilians was the 2021 June 5 attack on Solhan. A group of armed men arrived in the middle of the night and killed around 160 people indiscriminately (BBC 2021). The initial attack targeted a VDP, civilian defense force, post, though the assailants went on to pillage the town and burn down several homes (RFI 2021). Local authorities and witnesses say that many of the assailants were children, from around twelve to fourteen years old, exposing the extent to which Burkina Faso’s armed jihadist groups have been recruiting children (UNICEF 2021). No one group took responsibility for the attack, and no specific motive was identified. One of Burkina Faso’s main exports is gold, and Solhan is a mining town located in the northeastern region of the country. It is unclear if the attack was simply an indiscriminate show of violence, or if the group was motivated to destabilize Solhan’s gold mining in order to

seize its resources. The massacre at Solhan is the single deadliest terror attack Burkina Faso has had since the emergence of the crisis.

In the wake of the quickly deteriorating security crisis, President Kaboré and his government began to crack down on rights in the name of counter-terrorism. They “considerably curtailed liberties” and “basic civil rights – namely, freedom of assembly, of expression, and of the press – have been restricted by state authorities” (Engels 2022, 321). A law passed in 2019 criminalizes “any acts that may ‘demoralise’ the state security forces” (Engels 2022, 321). Human rights groups working in Burkina Faso have condemned the law for its broad nature, as it has allowed authorities to abuse their power since its passing. The Kaboré government’s crackdown on democratic freedoms in the name of counter-terrorism has had negative effects on democracy and Burkinabé people, and has done little to stymie terrorism and violence.

The government’s lack of effective solutions to counter-terrorism within the country led to the creation of a new controversial law. On January 21, 2022, the Burkinabé parliament unanimously established the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland, or VDPs. This law allows the government to recruit and arm its civilians in an effort to create a grassroots defense force for locals to protect their towns and villages from terrorist attacks (Demuynck 2021, 2). The military struggled for years to maintain a presence in rural localities and gain intelligence for counter-terrorism operations in these remote regions. Local communities inherently distrusted the central government, and terrorist groups often recruited locally and were familiar with the territory, thus giving them an advantage (Demuynck 2021, 4). The VDP program was supposed to help solve this problem and bring counter-terrorism efforts down to the civilian level. The program allowed any civilians over the age of eighteen to “voluntarily serve the security interests of their village or area of residence,” meaning they would receive two weeks of training, after

which they would be armed (Demuyneck 2021, 2). The implementation of the VDPs has been mostly unorganized, with some civilian auxiliaries being informally hired and improperly trained, and thus not accounted for in official records. The success of the VDPs is difficult to measure given its erratic implementation, though one outcome is clear: civilians are the new targets of terrorist groups. Once civilians were put on the front lines alongside the military and police, the redirection of violence towards them became inevitable. It is an unintended consequence of the program which has endangered thousands of innocent people (Demuyneck 2021, 8). The VDP law has also exacerbated intercommunal violence unrelated to terrorism, as the armament of civilians has allowed tensions to flare and given people the tools to act upon longstanding grievances. For example, an increase in violence between Fulani pastoralists and the sedentary communities of the Mossi and Foulse has been apparent since the armament of VDPs (Demuyneck 2021, 11). Similarly, the program's lack of oversight has resulted in human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings by VDP auxiliaries (Demuyneck 2021, 10). The VDPs have created new problems within Burkina Faso, and although it is possible they have successfully carried out sporadic counter-terrorism actions, the exacerbation of community violence and proliferation of arms among the civilian population will be a challenge the weak Burkinabé government will need to address in the coming years.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 682,000 people were displaced by conflict by 2021. 237,000 of those were newly displaced just that year (HRW 2021). This brought the total number of IDPs in Burkina Faso to 1,580,000 (IDMC 2021). The number of people forced from their homes because of pervasive violence, the threat of violence, or the actual destruction of their property from armed jihadists continues to grow the displacement crisis. The government's failure to secure Burkina Faso from terrorism is glaring.

Thousands have died since just 2015 because of the colossal increase in violence, and over a million have been displaced. The creation of the VDPs in many ways reads as an admission of the government's ineptitude to keep its citizens safe, and after six years of Kaboré's presidency, the legitimacy of his government was in precarious condition.

III. Political Instability - 2022 Coups

On January 24, 2022, President Kaboré was removed from office by a military coup. The new junta called themselves MPSR, or the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration, and was led by Colonel Paul-Henri Sandogo Damiba. Shortly after the announcement of the takeover, the government and parliament were dissolved and the constitution suspended (Engels 2022, 315). Damiba headed a transition phase and appointed Albert Ouédraogo as prime minister, promising to hold elections after thirty-six months of "transition." The UN and France have denounced the coup, and ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, subsequently suspended Burkina Faso's membership (Demuynck and Coleman 2022). Damiba is a leading military figure in Burkina Faso and headed anti-terrorism operations in the north prior to the coup. Interestingly, he was a member of the RSP under Compaoré, though he left the force in 2011 and opposed the 2015 coup attempt (Engels 2022, 317). The official justification given for the coup was that the Kaboré government failed to handle state security relating to terrorism and that the military could better address Burkina Faso's needs. While it is true that Kaboré's government proved itself incapable of fighting Islamic terrorist violence within the country, the shortcomings of the military remain a problem even after the coup. Prior to January, the military was extremely frustrated with its lack of resources and support to fight off the terrorist groups, which was one of the motivating factors for the coup (Demuynck and Coleman 2022). Their

seizure of power has yet to coincide with an increase in resources and ability to stabilize the country and ameliorate the security crisis.

The political instability created by the first coup in January, coupled by military infighting and power struggles, enabled a second coup to take place in September, eight months later. A faction of soldiers led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré orchestrated a “coup within a coup” on September 30, 2022, ousting Damiba from power (Chason and Tall 2022). Traoré dissolved Damiba’s transitional government and once again suspended the constitution after taking over; Damiba fled to neighboring Togo (Al Jazeera 2022). Again, the official reason was Burkina Faso’s deteriorating security crisis and Damiba’s inability to handle it. Since Damiba’s coup in January, “attacks by armed groups increased by 23 percent” in the following five months, and Ouagadougou only controls around 60 percent of the country, the other 40 percent held by nonstate groups (Al Jazeera 2022). Traoré and his soldiers claimed that Damiba had begun to focus too much on politics rather than national security and terrorism. Frustration within the military at Damiba’s failure to employ new “counteroffensive strategies” and seek military help from the Russians, rather than the West, drove a small group to carry out this second coup (Chason and Tall 2022). Damiba has been seen by many as cozying up too much to the French in employing counter-terrorism measures, which created more problems as “anti-France sentiment” has been rising in former colonies in West Africa (Al Jazeera 2022). The new interim president and leader of the country, Traoré, is only thirty four years old and was a “relatively low-ranking officer running an artillery regiment in a small northern town” (Al Jazeera 2022). He has claimed that there will be a return to civilian rule by 2024. In a press release from November 9, 2022, the new government under Traoré stated that a mass recruitment of VDPs was an ongoing goal of the army to “reinforce” their ranks. The statement says that in order to enroll the “greatest

number” of new army auxiliaries, the government “has given instructions for a reduction in formalities,” which one can assume means the program is taking on an even more informal status and citizens are receiving even less training before induction and armament (Bia 2022a). AIB identifies that there are 15,000 VDPs at the national level and 35,000 at the communal level currently, and that more than 25,000 new auxiliaries enlisted by the time of the press release. According to the government, its goal is to recruit 50,000 new VDPs to boost security support (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso 2022a). This is a massive supplement to the former program and will result in tens of thousands more arms available within the Burkinabé population. The decision to increase the VDP program as a counter-terrorism measure is risky in its likelihood of increasing violence, though it could take years to fully understand its effects. Other strategies by the new government to combat violence have yet to be seen due to the newness of the situation.

The two coups of 2022, unsurprisingly, have had negative impacts on Burkina Faso’s stability. According to the Fragile States Index, Burkina Faso had the third highest increase in state fragility within the past year, behind only Myanmar and Afghanistan. The fragility measure is expected to increase, as the onset of the second coup has caused more confusion, more displacement, and no respite to the violence. Burkina Faso’s political instability should also be put into context within the Sahel; within the past eighteen months, there have been “two coups in neighboring Mali, an attempted coup in Niger, an institutional coup in Chad, and another in Guinea” (Demuyneck and Coleman 2022). This regional destabilization will continue to have negative effects for Burkina Faso, as its neighbors also battle rising Islamic terrorism and violence alongside political volatility. To reiterate a statistic from the introduction, 455,000 people were newly displaced between January and August of 2022 (ECHO 2022). This

timeframe falls after the first coup and before the second, so within the following year the full effects on displacement from the second coup will become apparent.

IV. Climate Change in the Sahel

The effects of climate change are also incredibly salient in the Sahel, forcing people from their homes alongside terrorism and political instability. Temperatures in the Sahel are rising at 1.5 times the global average due to climate change, which has led to desertification, drought, and prolonged heat waves (UN 2022). Variable precipitation has also caused devastating flooding in regions unaccustomed to heavy rainfall. Eighty percent of the Sahel's population relies on subsistence agriculture and fishing, so the effects of climate change are having massive implications for the majority of Sahelians: "Sahelian countries are simultaneously among the most affected by climate change and the least prepared to adapt" (Tesfaye 2022, 3). The African continent feels the effects of climate change more than any other in the world, and the Sahel is the most vulnerable and critically affected region.

Climate change is considered a "threat multiplier" as well, because its effects compound local risk factors for conflict. Rising tensions between farmers and herders within the Sahel regions and the rural regions of Burkina Faso lend a good example. While for centuries they were able to peacefully share resources, lands that were traditionally left for pastoralists have been encroached upon by farming communities. Because of land degradation due to climate change and rampant population growth, farmers have moved into grazing lands used by pastoralist herders, creating conflict for land and water resources as the two groups fight to survive (Tesfaye 2022, 6). Collective violence is spurred by clashes over scarce resources, and extremist groups quickly move in to exploit tensions in these situations. This is part of why jihadism is strongest in the northern, rural regions of the country.

Climate change is forcing a rural exodus in the Sahel, as agriculture becomes an unsustainable way of life and those in rural regions find government resources inaccessible to them. Many people have lost jobs in agriculture, or simply cannot sustain a subsistence lifestyle like they once could. In Burkina Faso, many have sought new opportunities in Ouagadougou, though the recent precariousness of the government has made it incapable of assisting all those in need. Extreme weather has also contributed to displacement in recent years. In 2020, a flood displaced 20,000 people, and in October of 2022 another 2,500 people were displaced by flooding (IDMC 2021). Loss of livelihood and extreme climate events will continue to grow as a main contributor to displacement in Burkina Faso, the Sahel, and Africa as a whole as climate change ravages the continent.

V. Food Insecurity and Famine

Food insecurity is intrinsically linked with climate change, as land degradation has reduced the agriculture sector and thus led to much lower crop yields. Between 3 and 3.5 million people in Burkina Faso are food insecure, feeding into a larger crisis in the Sahel in which almost 18 million people are at risk (WFP 2022, UN 2022). The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the crisis by driving up the price of food, especially grain; over 40 percent of the Burkinabé population lives on less than \$1.90 USD a day, leaving many people unable to purchase already scarce rations (ReliefWeb 2022). In areas with high concentrations of IDPs, malnutrition rates are reaching as high as 19.7 percent, and 25 percent of children under five are suffering from stunting (WFP 2019, 2022). Likewise, 21.6 percent of children aged 60 to 59 months are experiencing chronic malnutrition. Many humanitarian groups fear that the Sahel could be on the brink of famine as converging crises put vulnerable populations at incredible risk. Similarly, clean drinking water is becoming more and more scarce in Burkina Faso, especially for IDPs.

Climate change and food insecurity have forced thousands of Burkinabé from their homes in rural areas and pushed them into either cities or IDP camps. This only contributes to the mass amount of people forced from their homes due to violence and instability. Burkina Faso is facing an existential crisis, and its security and humanitarian emergencies need immediate attention.

VI. Current State

There are few options for Burkina Faso's IDPs; they must either move into bigger cities, rely on family members for support, or move into an IDP camp. The National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation, or CONASUR, places the number of IDPs at 1,719,332 as of September 30, 2022. 50,000 Burkinabé have fled the country into neighboring countries since January of 2021 as well, a figure which has likely risen in the past year. Likewise, Burkina Faso is home to around 35,000 refugees from Mali, adding to the displacement crisis (UNHCR 2022).

Many IDPs in Burkina Faso have taken refuge in limited numbers of IDP camps. The first IDP camp opened in Burkina Faso in 2020 in response to the escalating violence which displaced hundreds of thousands of Burkinabé in 2019 alone. It is home to around 6,000 people in the Barga municipality, which is in the Yatenga province close to the city of Ouahigouya. A second camp was built in December 2021 and is home to around 10,000 people (African Development Bank 2022). As of April 2022, Ouahigouya has absorbed around 130,000 IDPs, more than doubling the city's population. The African Development Bank has partnered with CONASUR in relief efforts and provided Burkina Faso with \$500,000 from its Special Relief Fund. Though helpful, these efforts have been minimal in the context of the situation. The grant "has funded the construction of 300 shelters" and "provided 1,000 displaced households with mats and blankets" (African Development Bank 2022). With over 1.5 million people displaced,

very few people have reaped the benefits of aid. In the northern regions where violence is the most prevalent, access to humanitarian aid is rare, and people must rely on the kindness of other Burkinabé in nearby cities. Some parts of the country are under siege and blockade by nonstate groups, further hindering aid efforts (UNHCR 2022). In an operational update from the 1st of August to the 30th of September 2022, UNHCR oversaw the provision of 462 emergency shelters and 94 semi-permanent shelters, aiding 3,243 people (UNHCR 2022). Again, though beneficial, much more assistance is required to satisfy the tremendous amount of humanitarian need in the country.

The Burkinabé government, in its disarray, has released a couple press releases to demonstrate its altruism towards the growing IDP population. In August, before the second coup when Damiba was still in power, prime minister at the time Albert Ouédraogo visited a construction site for a future IDP camp. The government is building four “communal cities” for IDPs in the cities of Kaya, Dori, Kongoussi, and Tougouri (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso 2022b). The press release outlining Ouédraogo’s visit is propagandist in many ways, as it is sure to highlight the “goodwill” of the prime minister in allocating land and funding for the project. In the site he visited near Kaya, 483 of 600 emergency shelters have been built, though they appear to be of poor quality. Each shelter should be able to accommodate seven people, according to government ministers (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso 2022b). In November, Traoré’s government also announced the development of a government humanitarian plan for 2023, though few details are available. In the article from AIB the government identifies a “coordinated” plan for assistance to IDPs as its goal (Bia 2022b).

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic further complicated the lives of IDPs in Burkina Faso. Violence had already led to school and hospital closures around the country, affecting the

most vulnerable populations, so Burkina Faso was in an incredibly weak position to handle Covid. In March of 2020, President Kaboré mandated curfews, banned large gatherings, and closed Burkina Faso's borders to address the oncoming pandemic (Ozer et. al 2022, 2). The strict lockdowns that followed put strain on the IDPs as they could not work nor leave their regions in search of better opportunities and aid (Ozer et. al 2022, 3). Burkina Faso had a lockdown from March to May of 2020, and many IDPs saw their ability to create livelihoods for themselves significantly reduced. People surveyed in Kongoussi said they feared death from "empty pockets" more than death from Covid (Ozer et. al 2022, 6). IDPs also became more vulnerable to both attacks from terrorists and environmental hazards like flooding due to their inability to move freely. Vaccination efforts have been hindered due to violence and inaccessibility to those in rural regions.

The international response to the Burkinabé crisis is mostly unified in its alarm, although it is still incredibly underfunded and largely neglected. As of September 29, 2022, UNHCR requested \$109.9 million USD for humanitarian operations in Burkina Faso; they received only \$45.3 million, meaning the program is only funded 42% and underfunded 58% (UNHCR 2022). Ultimately, the war in Ukraine is diverting the majority of international attention at the moment, leaving the Sahel countries at increased risk. The crisis in Burkina Faso is largely unknown by the rest of the world, and the lack of awareness correlates with the lack of funding.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, there is no sign of expected improvement in Burkina Faso. Only time will tell what the transitional government under Traoré will be able to achieve, but violence has continued to increase in the country. Climate change also has yet to be dealt with, which over time will come to be an even bigger challenge for the Sahel and Africa as a whole. What is clear

is that there is no one cause for displacement in Burkina Faso, and that political instability, terrorism, and climate change create a perfect storm, exacerbating one another and forcing thousands more people out of their homes every month. The failures of the government to relieve its citizens from violence signals that state failure in Burkina Faso is a possibility in the coming years, especially if coups continue to destabilize the system and allow terrorist groups to gain more territory within the country. The Burkinabé people are facing insurmountable challenges and receiving little respite. More needs to be done to aid them in creating a safe environment to rebuild their lives.

The amalgamation of problems in Burkina Faso is perhaps a window into what the world will be facing in the coming years. Climate change will continue to push people out of their homes and create competition and conflict for scarce resources, and the current international geopolitical landscape does not indicate that there will be lasting global peace. The international community must focus its energy on the problems in the Sahel to better prepare for its own future.

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