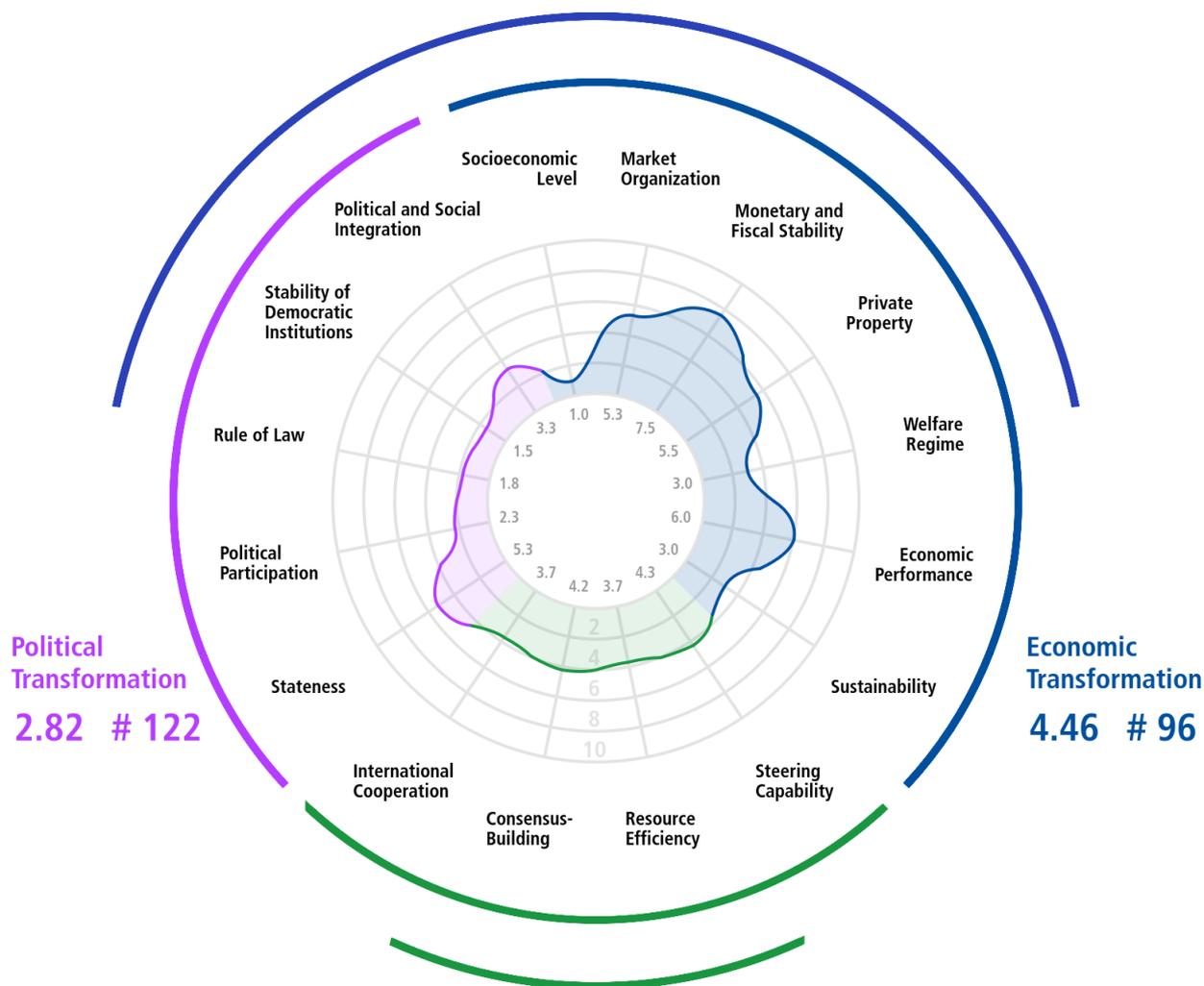


Burkina Faso

Status Index

3.64 # 109

on 1-10 scale out of 137



Political Transformation
2.82 # 122

Economic Transformation
4.46 # 96

Governance Index

3.80 # 101

on 1-10 scale out of 137

This report is part of the **Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2026**. It covers the period from February 1, 2023 to January 31, 2025. The BTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. More on the BTI at <https://www.bti-project.org>.

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Key Indicators

Population	M	23.5	HDI	0.459	GDP p.c., PPP \$	2896
Pop. growth ¹	% p.a.	2.2	HDI rank of 193	186	Gini Index	37.4
Life expectancy	years	61.1	UN Education Index	0.318	Poverty ³	% 60.7
Urban population	%	33.2	Gender inequality ²	0.555	Aid per capita \$	62.4

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | UNDP, Human Development Report 2025. Footnotes: (1) Average annual growth rate. (2) Gender Inequality Index (GII). (3) Percentage of population living on less than \$3.65 a day at 2017 international prices.

Executive Summary

Burkina Faso underwent a turbulent period of transformation between 2023 and 2025, marked by military rule, an evolving security landscape, economic restructuring and shifting geopolitical alliances. While there has been some progress in the economic and security sectors, the quality of democratic governance has significantly deteriorated, raising concerns about the country's long-term trajectory.

In recent years, the political landscape in Burkina Faso has been dominated by the military-led government under Captain Ibrahim Traoré. Following two military coups in 2022, the promised democratic transition has been postponed. The National Assembly in May 2024 extended the transition period by five years, meaning no elections will take place until at least July 2029. Political parties have been banned from operating and civil society organizations face growing repression, with activists, journalists and opposition figures subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrests or forced recruitment into state-aligned militias.

Press freedom, once a hallmark of Burkina Faso's democratic aspirations, has significantly declined. Numerous international and local media outlets have been banned, and state-controlled narratives dominate the information space. Government critics face threats, censorship or exile, further weakening democratic discourse.

Judicial independence has also deteriorated. The High Court of Justice was abolished in December 2023, and constitutional amendments now allow individuals without judicial experience to serve in key legal institutions. Judges and legal professionals critical of the regime have been arrested, pressured or co-opted into military roles.

Burkina Faso continues to struggle with insecurity, with about 30% of its territory under the control of jihadist groups by late 2024. The government has prioritized military solutions, deploying both national security forces and the controversial Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (Volontaires de la Défense de la Patrie, VDP). While the government has reclaimed

some territory, these efforts have been accompanied by reports of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and ethnically motivated violence, particularly against the Fulani community.

Humanitarian conditions remain dire. The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) peaked at more than 2 million in early 2023, though government figures suggest more than a million had returned home by the end of 2024. Despite this, insecurity continues to disrupt access to basic services such as health care, education and food supplies.

Burkina Faso has undertaken significant economic reforms, including efforts to nationalize key industries. One of the most notable actions was the state takeover of the gold mining sector, aimed at ensuring greater national control over revenues. Additionally, the government announced the clearance of Burkina Faso's \$4.7 billion external debt.

Infrastructure development has continued despite financial constraints. The expansion of solar power plants and a hydroelectric dam project is expected to improve electricity access, though rural areas still lag behind. By 2025, a nuclear power cooperation project with Russia will also be in its early planning stages.

The country's economic relationships have shifted dramatically. Following strained relations with Western partners, Burkina Faso has strengthened ties with Russia, China and other non-Western powers. Development aid from France, Luxembourg and Sweden has been significantly reduced, while regional cooperation with Mali and Niger has deepened through the establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États du Sahel, AES).

History and Characteristics of Transformation

After gaining independence in 1960, this landlocked West African country experienced a period of significant political instability marked by multiple military coups. When Capt. Thomas Sankara came to power in 1983 following a coup, it represented a break from previous regimes. Sankara implemented a policy of radical change, focusing on economic self-reliance, the fight against corruption and the empowerment of the rural population. However, his government also adopted an authoritarian approach, restricting political freedoms and repressing opposition.

In 1987, Blaise Compaoré orchestrated the assassination of his former ally, Sankara. Under Compaoré, Burkina Faso appeared to transition toward a more liberal political environment, but in reality it maintained an authoritarian regime built on patronage and clientelism. Facing popular pressure and regional developments, Compaoré initiated a gradual liberalization of the regime. In 1991, a new constitution was adopted, introducing a multiparty system and presidential elections, though these remained dominated by the ruling party. However, Compaoré retained a firm grip on power through electoral manipulation and constitutional amendments.

Economically, the 1990s were defined by the implementation of structural adjustment programs under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. These structural reforms included privatization of state-owned enterprises, market deregulation and increased openness to foreign investment. While these measures led to some economic growth, particularly in the agricultural and mining sectors, they also exacerbated social inequality and deepened poverty.

Popular discontent peaked in 2014 when Compaoré attempted to amend the constitution to extend his term in office. A massive uprising erupted, forcing him to resign and flee into exile. Under the leadership of Michel Kafando, a democratic transition was initiated and the first free elections were held in 2015, bringing Roch Marc Christian Kaboré to power. This period was marked by renewed democratic hope even as economic and security challenges persisted.

Since 2015, Burkina Faso has faced a surge in armed terrorist activity, particularly in the north and east of the country. This growing insecurity has placed a heavy burden on the economy and weakened state authority. Despite efforts to modernize the military and strengthen institutions, the security situation has continued to deteriorate, leading to massive population displacement and a humanitarian crisis. Additionally, Burkina Faso's economy, which is highly dependent on agriculture and mining, has been affected by fluctuations in commodity prices and climate-related challenges. The government has sought to diversify the economy by investing in infrastructure and developing the manufacturing sector. However, these initiatives have been hampered by political and security instability.

Following countrywide protests against worsening insecurity and calls for his resignation, Kaboré was overthrown in January 2022 in a military coup led by Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. However, Damiba himself was deposed in another coup in October of the same year, led by Capt. Ibrahim Traoré. These events reflect a deep government crisis and a loss of public confidence in the traditional political elite.

A few weeks after Traoré seized power, recruitment began for 50,000 members of the so-called *Volontaires de la Défense de la Patrie* (VDP) – auxiliary forces originally established at the village level under Kaboré – in response to the overwhelming strain on the regular army amid a surge in terrorist attacks across the country. The VDP became a central pillar of Traoré's strategy to combat terrorism and corruption.

As Burkina Faso has gradually strengthened ties with new partners such as Russia, relations with its former colonial power France have deteriorated. This shift has also been reflected regionally as Burkina Faso has deepened cooperation with neighboring Mali, which, like Burkina Faso, has faced ECOWAS sanctions due to military coups. Despite efforts to realign its foreign partnerships, ongoing political instability underscores the fragility of democracy in Burkina Faso.

The BTI combines text analysis and numerical assessments. The score for each question is provided below its respective title. The scale ranges from 1 (worst) to 10 (best).

Transformation Status

I. Political Transformation

1 | Stateness

Large areas of the country are controlled by jihadist organizations and criminal networks that collaborate with them.

Two major terrorist groups are active in Burkina Faso:

1. The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen, JNIM). This alliance includes Ansar Dine, Katiba al-Murabitoun, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Macina Liberation Front, Ansaroul Islam, Katiba Alidougou, Katiba Hanifa, Katiba Sekou Mouslimou and Gulmu cells.

2. The Islamic State (IS) group: Represented by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (État islamique dans le Grand Sahara, EIGS) and the Islamic State in West Africa (État islamique en Afrique de l'Ouest, EIAO).

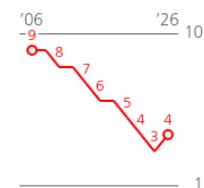
Since the first terrorist attack in 2015, the security situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated to such an extent that the state initially tolerated the involvement of non-state security forces such as Koglweogo and Dozo. From 2019 onward, the government in some cases granted them unofficial contracts, leading to the formal establishment of the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP) in January 2020.

Compared to the previous reporting period, about 10% of the country's territory has been recaptured and schools have reopened. However, this outsourcing of the state's monopoly on violence should be viewed with caution. It has gone hand in hand with the increasing militarization of an authoritarian regime that forcibly conscripts government critics into military service, imprisons them without trial or causes them to "disappear."

Question
Score

Monopoly on the
use of force

4



1

The non-state security forces mentioned above do not aim to replace the state but instead exclude certain communities and commit human rights violations on a massive scale – often in coordination with state security forces.

The Burkinabè nation-state has experienced significant upheaval, particularly since the second military coup led by Capt. Ibrahim Traoré. Initially constructed by the French colonial administration, efforts are now underway to decolonize its French institutional structures – a process already evident in the severing of ties with France and expected to continue with the drafting of a new constitution entirely independent of the French model.

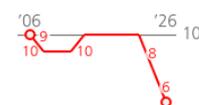
This process of reinvention is also reflected in other major foreign policy shifts, such as Burkina Faso’s withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the G5 Sahel, and the establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États du Sahel, AES) alongside the military governments of Mali and Niger. Additionally, the government has pivoted toward other authoritarian and partially socialist states, including Russia, China, North Korea, Iran and Türkiye, while also expressing the desire to abolish the CFA franc (XOF).

Since Traoré came to power, there have been multiple coup attempts. His policies have actively divided the population into “patriotic” supporters and “nonpatriotic” opponents of the regime, which has negatively affected national identity and social cohesion. In response, efforts have been made to counter this division by reviving the legacy of Thomas Sankara – including renaming streets in his honor, declaring him a “Hero of the Nation,” constructing a mausoleum and changing the national motto in the constitution. Another approach has been the promotion of culture and tradition. In 2024, May 15 was declared Journée des coutumes et traditions (Day of Customs and Traditions) and celebrated with a ceremony at the Mossi chief’s palace. Additionally, a constitutional amendment elevated the national languages Mòoré, Fulfuldé, Jula and Bissa to official status, while French was downgraded to a working language alongside English.

Despite some representation of the Fulani community in state institutions – such as the appointment of Fulani members to the Legislative Transitional Assembly (Assemblée législative de transition, ALT) and the selection of an associate minister in the transitional government under Prime Minister Rimalba Jean Emmanuel Ouédraogo in December 2024 – Fulani individuals remain under-represented in the state security forces and continue to be excluded from the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP). The stigmatization of the Fulani persists, with deadly attacks against their communities continuing to escalate in the context of the fight against terrorism.

State identity

6



1

The state is constitutionally defined as secular, with religious dogmas exerting no significant influence on politics or the legal system. A key reason for this is Burkina Faso's long-standing religious diversity and the high degree of religious tolerance that has distinguished the country in the region.

According to a 2019 estimate by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 63.8% of the population is Muslim (primarily Sunni), 26.3% is Christian (mainly Catholic, with some Protestants and Pentecostal groups) and 9% practice traditional religions or animism. Islam in Burkina Faso has a distinctively African character and is generally considered moderate. Many families are religiously mixed, and religious conversions occur among the Burkinabè. Religious leaders promote a moderate discourse, advocating mutual respect and recognition of each other's holidays. While religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, it is severely restricted in many areas due to jihadist groups, particularly in rural regions.

In the past, religious authorities played an important role as mediators in local and national political and social conflicts. However, during the reporting period, their ability to fulfill this role was significantly hindered by severe restrictions on press freedom and freedom of speech. In Bobo-Dioulasso, two imams were arrested and abducted by state security forces in March 2023 and August 2024, respectively.

Many Burkinabè religious leaders condemn terrorist attacks and consistently urge the population not to be manipulated by extremist religious rhetoric. Although the officially registered number of attacks on religious institutions and individuals decreased during the reporting period, the actual number of incidents is likely much higher, as terrorist attacks have largely gone unreported in Burkinabè media since May 2023.

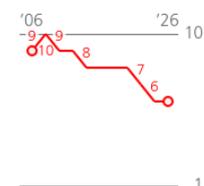
Even before the first terrorist attack in Burkina Faso in April 2015, religious extremism had been creeping in due to various factors, including the financing of mosques in Burkina Faso by associations from Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia; Burkinabè graduates of Islamic schools traveling to Gulf states for higher education; and visits from foreign preachers and the return of individuals such as Malam Dicko (founder of Ansaroul Islam), who studied the Quran in Mali under extremist clerics such as Amadou Koufa (leader of the Macina Liberation Front).

The two main Islamist groups operating in Burkina Faso, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), fundamentally undermine the country's tradition of religious tolerance – posing a direct threat to both the state and society.

In areas outside state control, Islamist groups have established jihadi governance and enforced Shariah law since 2018. This includes bans on smoking, music, alcohol and certain animals; mandatory veiling for women and beards for men; compulsory mosque attendance; harsh punishments imposed by Islamic judges (Ghadi) such as floggings and amputations; and strict enforcement by Ansaroul Islam.

No interference of religious dogmas

6



1

Armed groups also impose taxation systems, collecting zakat (Islamic tax) from cattle herders and gold miners, charging fees for transporting goods and profiting from the sale of stolen livestock.

Their territorial expansion strategy involves gradually encircling major towns by seizing control of access routes to surrounding villages. This is followed by blockades of the area, destruction of critical infrastructure and ultimatums for civilians to vacate the region.

This strategy disrupts village supply chains, making it difficult to deliver essential goods. It also hinders access by humanitarian convoys and increases the risk of starvation in affected communities. Key transport routes are frequently mined, as control over supply and trade routes is a cornerstone of the insurgents' political economy.

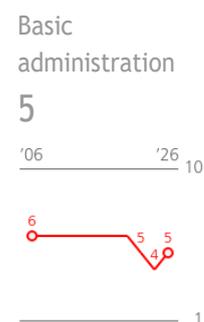
The most recent local elections were held in 2016. Since January 2022, an appointed Special Delegation has replaced the local and regional administration.

The decentralization of social services has worsened due to the ongoing security crisis. The deteriorating security situation is significantly affecting the functioning of many municipalities in Burkina Faso.

There are no more recent figures on access to clean water during the current reporting period than those provided in the BTI 2024. As of that time, approximately 55.9% of the total population had access to clean water. Despite significant progress in infrastructure, about 4 million people in the country still lack access to safe drinking water. In urban areas, more than 90% of the population has reliable access to drinking water, while only 34% of the urban population uses sanitation facilities. In rural areas, 43% of people have access to at least basic water supplies.

Regarding electricity, only 19.5% of the population had access to electricity in 2022. Forecasts indicate this proportion is expected to increase slightly in the coming years due to the commissioning of solar power plants in Bobo-Dioulasso and Pâ in December 2023, as well as the hydroelectric power plant at the Samandeni Dam in the municipality of Bama in June 2024. Additional solar power plants are currently under construction. In cooperation with Russia, a nuclear power plant is planned to be built in Burkina Faso by 2030.

The national rate of access to basic sanitation improved slightly from 18.0% in 2015 to 28% in 2023, although the share of households with private sanitation facilities remains at just 9.7%. Nevertheless, sanitation continues to be a critical development issue.



In summary, access to clean water, sanitation and electricity remains a challenge in Burkina Faso, particularly in rural areas, but some improvements have been made during the reporting period.

The condition of many roads and bridges has further deteriorated because of terrorist attacks and heavy rains during the rainy season.

The number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) reached a peak of 2,062,534 at the end of March 2023 (according to Conseil national de secours d'urgence et de réhabilitation, CONASUR), compared to about 1.6 million under the previous administration of Damiba.

Without providing an exact figure, the new minister for humanitarian aid and national solidarity, Passowendé Pélagie Kabré/Kaboré, announced on December 8, 2024, that more than 1 million displaced people had returned to their homes.

After a peak in school closures in May 2023, when 6,149 schools were closed, the current government reduced this number to about 4,000 by June 2024.

Progress has been made in the rollout of the malaria vaccine, and dengue tests are now free. Additionally, a universal health insurance program is set to be introduced. In July 2024, 15 mobile clinics equipped with specialized medical devices, including mammography, ultrasound and colonoscopy equipment, were handed over to public health facilities in villages, rural areas and some city outskirts. Treatment and services are provided free of charge. Some hospitals have received new equipment, while hospitals in Bobo-Dioulasso, Gaoua and Doulougou are currently under construction, with expansion efforts underway in Dori.

Despite Burkina Faso's efforts to establish cooperation with new partners, many countries have suspended or reduced their development aid for the next five years due to the ongoing military rule. In 2022, for example, official development assistance volumes declined by 16%, and have likely continued to decrease since. This reduction in aid could negatively affect the progress already achieved.

2 | Political Participation

After Traoré replaced his predecessor Damiba on September 30, 2022, a 21-month transition period was established, with elections to restore a democratic civilian government in Burkina Faso initially scheduled for July 2024.

National assemblies convened on May 25 and 26, 2024, bringing together civil society organizations, state security forces, the VDP and representatives of political parties. While external groups supporting Traoré (Wayignans) protested, the meeting reached the following decisions after just one day:

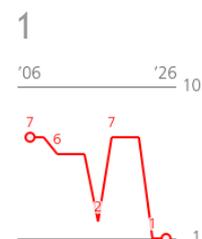
- Under the revised charter, the president during the transition will become the president of Faso. The extended transition period will last five years from July 2, 2024.
- The president of Faso, the prime minister and the president of the Legislative Transitional Assembly (ALT) will be eligible to run in the next elections.
- Twelve representatives from political parties of all orientations will be included in the ALT.
- The selection of government members and deputies will be based on patriotism.

Most established political parties did not participate, presumably because they no longer hold legitimacy, as they are banned from taking part in any political activity.

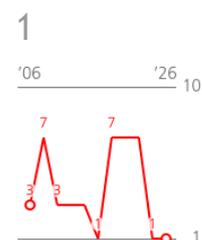
This effectively means there will be no free and fair elections in Burkina Faso until at least July 2029.

As no elections are expected until at least July 2029, there will be no democratically elected political representatives with effective power to govern. Appointments to the various transitional bodies depend entirely on the discretion of President Traoré and are based on the criterion of patriotism.

Free and fair elections



Effective power to govern



Under Traoré's regime, individuals in Burkina Faso face significant challenges in forming and joining independent political or civic groups. Although the 1991 constitution – still in effect under the transitional charter – technically guarantees freedoms of assembly and association, these rights have been increasingly restricted since the military coup in September 2022.

Political parties have been banned from operating, with plans to further reduce their number. At the same time, the junta has shown a clear pattern of suppressing anti-government protests while endorsing demonstrations in its favor. Civil society rallies are increasingly prohibited unless they are organized by new social movements that support Traoré and the transition.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially those involved in human rights and governance, face increasing restrictions. The junta has used emergency laws to target perceived dissidents, including human rights defenders and journalists, and may revoke the status of certain NGOs in the future. Meanwhile, the right to form trade unions and strike, although constitutionally protected, is undermined by the transitional charter, which gives the executive branch broad authority to intervene in labor activities.

Further intensifying the crackdown, numerous civil society members and former opposition figures have faced intimidation, arrest or even forced recruitment into the VDP. Under these conditions, independent political and civic engagement in Burkina Faso is becoming increasingly precarious.

Press freedom in Burkina Faso has declined sharply in recent years. Since the military coup in September 2022, led by Traoré, the government has increasingly repressed independent media and critical journalists.

Numerous international media outlets have been temporarily suspended or permanently banned, including RFI, France24, LCI, Jeune Afrique, Le Monde, VOA Afrique, BBC Africa, TV5 Monde, Deutsche Welle, Ouest-France, ApaNews, The Guardian and Agence Ecofin. The authorities accuse these media organizations of biased reporting or providing a platform for terrorists.

Local media outlets such as l'Événement, Omega Médias and certain programs on BF1 have also been affected. The online newspaper Lefaso.net is required to delete articles and “moderate” discussions under its publications, while L'Observateur Paalga has been summoned by the Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC) over an article about Mali. Journalists from Burkina Info TV, Courrier Confidentiel, RTB, Omega Médias, Mutations, Opinion/BF1 and L'Événement have been threatened, kidnapped or forcibly recruited as VDP.

Since about May 2023, Burkinabè media have reported almost exclusively on successful Defense and Security Forces (FDS) offensives, with little or no coverage of terrorist attacks. These reports largely consist of government or military communiqués and use military terminology. Journalists have effectively been reduced to communicators, relaying information without analysis or debate.

Association / assembly rights

4

'06 _____ '26 10



1

Freedom of expression

3

'06 _____ '26 10



1

The government often justifies these measures by citing the tense security situation and the fight against terrorism. However, human rights organizations view them as attempts to suppress criticism of the military leadership and severely restrict press freedom.

In addition to the constraints imposed by the security crisis – such as limited access to information, threats of abduction and assassination, attacks on radio stations, and sabotage of telecommunications infrastructure – the military junta under Traoré has introduced further restrictions.

For years, press freedom in Burkina Faso was considered satisfactory and the country was regarded as one of the most dynamic in terms of media pluralism. However, since Traoré took power, Burkina Faso's ranking in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index has dropped from 41st place in 2022 to 86th out of 180 countries in 2024.

Overall, press freedom in Burkina Faso is currently severely restricted, significantly limiting independent journalism and the public's access to uncensored information. Additionally, manipulation on social media – carried out by Russian actors, Traoré's supporters and other internet activists – further distorts the media landscape.

3 | Rule of Law

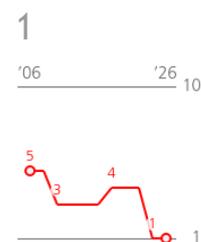
Following the two military coups in 2022, the separation of powers was formally maintained, with a transitional government, the ALT and the judiciary (KORAG) still in place.

However, especially after the National Assembly in May 2024 – during which the transitional period was extended by several years and the transitional charter was amended – the president was granted even greater authority over the composition and functioning of KORAG.

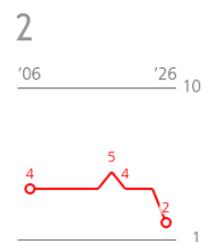
For years, the judiciary in Burkina Faso has faced significant challenges, including a lack of resources, inadequate equipment and low salaries, which make judges, public prosecutors and judicial staff more vulnerable to corruption. There is also a severe shortage of personnel, leading to considerable delays in court proceedings and placing an overwhelming burden on the judicial system.

Political interference in the judiciary is common, particularly in cases involving political or economic interests. Judges and prosecutors frequently report pressure from the executive and other powerful actors – a situation that has worsened under Traoré's government. Key judicial bodies, such as the Supreme Council of the Magistracy, have been bypassed, as seen with the draft constitutional amendment. A number of lawyers and judges have been arrested and accused of involvement in

Separation of powers



Independent judiciary



destabilization attempts and corruption, often without being given a trial. In some cases, they have been forcibly recruited into the VDP. In reality, many of these legal professionals have openly criticized the authoritarian regime and its legal violations.

In late December 2023, the ALT passed constitutional amendments that abolished the High Court of Justice and allowed individuals who are not magistrates to serve on the Superior Council of the Judiciary.

In July 2024, Traoré announced plans to investigate the judicial system under the pretext of combating corruption – an action that represents a significant encroachment on judicial independence. Meanwhile, threats against judges, lawyers and their families have increased, particularly from Traoré’s supporter groups (Wayignans).

Under Traoré’s leadership, political corruption has further undermined the rule of law in Burkina Faso. While his government justifies its actions as necessary to combat terrorism and corruption, several key aspects of governance under his rule highlight how corruption is accelerating the erosion of the rule of law:

The military’s dominance in key political, economic and security sectors has weakened the checks and balances essential for upholding the rule of law. Political decisions are increasingly made with little transparency, accountability or respect for legal principles.

Under Traoré’s rule, judges and legal institutions are increasingly subject to political influence, undermining their ability to deliver fair and impartial justice (which did not exist before Traoré either). The military junta has been accused of appointing loyalists to key positions, weakening the judiciary’s capacity to challenge unlawful acts including corruption.

Traoré’s government has also been accused of suppressing political opposition and curbing fundamental freedoms such as freedom of speech and assembly. In this context, corruption often appears in the targeting of critics, independent media and human rights organizations. Those who challenge the government’s policies or actions are sometimes silenced through legal harassment or intimidation, further eroding the rule of law and allowing corruption to thrive unchecked.

The administration has faced allegations of corruption, particularly in the security sector. Resources intended for counter-terrorism and insurgency efforts are often misallocated or diverted, contributing to the deterioration of security and state authority. Some military officers have been implicated in embezzlement and mismanagement, further worsening instability in the country.

The military junta’s hold on power has made it difficult for independent institutions to hold officials accountable for corruption or misconduct. The junta’s opacity, combined with the absence of a functioning political opposition, has fostered a culture

Prosecution of
office abuse

2

'06 '26 10



of impunity, allowing those in power to act without fear of legal consequences. Investigations into corruption are rare, and when they do occur, they are often politicized or dismissed.

The absence of foreign support has further enabled corruption to flourish in a system with insufficient external scrutiny.

The Freedom in the World 2022 report classified Burkina Faso as “partly free” in 2021, assigning it a score of 27 out of 100 points. The 2022 coups brought the military back to the center of the political arena, increasingly restricting political rights for the population.

The death penalty is set to be reintroduced, homosexuality is to be criminalized and Burkinabè citizens who act against the interests of the state may be stripped of their citizenship.

Furthermore, ethnic discrimination and violence – particularly human rights violations committed by state security forces and their auxiliaries – have escalated significantly. Public criticism of these abuses has been increasingly suppressed. Members of civil society, including social movements such as Balai Citoyen, Organisation de la Jeunesse (ODJ) and Mouvement Sauvons le Burkina, as well as human rights organizations like Collectif contre l’impunité et la stigmatisation des communautés (CISC) and Mouvement Burkinabè des Droits de l’Homme et des Peuples (MBDHP), along with the trade union Confédération Générale des Travailleurs du Burkina (CGT-B), have faced abductions and forced recruitment.

As part of the general mobilization decree issued in April 2023, men and women age 18 and older are required to register for military service with the VDP. However, this registration is not entirely voluntary, as public administration institutions can designate “dispensable persons” for enlistment.

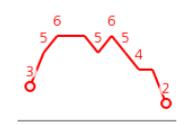
Discrimination in Burkina Faso is a multifaceted issue that primarily affects women in access to education, employment and land ownership. Forced and early marriages remain widespread, as does gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Certain religious and ethnic minorities – particularly the Fulani community – as well as people with disabilities and economically disadvantaged individuals also face significant discrimination.

Rural populations, largely dependent on agriculture, are often marginalized compared to urban populations, which have greater access to infrastructure and economic opportunities. Informal sector workers, who make up a large share of the labor force, lack social protection and are vulnerable to exploitation. Although efforts have been made to promote equality and human rights, discrimination persists – especially in rural areas and within the broader context of the ongoing security crisis.

Civil rights

2

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4 | Stability of Democratic Institutions

At the end of 2022 and in mid-2024, the Legislative Transitional Assembly (ALT) – whose members were appointed by the military rulers – along with several parliamentary commissions, was established. The ALT has a certain degree of political flexibility. Most regional and local constitutional bodies have been dissolved, while the central judiciary and administration remain in place but have lost their independence.

With the amendment of the transitional charter at the end of May 2024, the election of government and parliamentary members will be based on “patriotism.” Under this justification, it will likely become easier to remove individuals deemed undesirable for not aligning with Traoré’s policies.

In response to the brutal attack in the village of Solhan (Yagha province) in the Sahel, which left up to 160 people dead, protests against insecurity erupted as demonstrators demanded better support from national authorities and state security forces. The Inata attack in mid-November 2021 triggered a new wave of protests that escalated into calls for President Kaboré’s resignation. During this period, numerous new movements emerged. Nationwide protests on November 27, 2021 and January 22, 2022, followed a mutiny and a military coup led by the Patriotic Movement for Protection and Restoration (Mouvement Patriotique pour la Sauvegarde et la Restauration, MPSR) under Lieutenant Colonel Damiba.

After the overthrow of President Kaboré on January 24, 2022, demonstrations supporting the military junta increased, particularly in the major cities of Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. When Damiba seized power, he pledged to prioritize restoring security. However, in the following months, the security situation continued to deteriorate at an accelerated pace. This led to protests in late September 2022 demanding Damiba’s resignation and ultimately culminated in another mutiny and a second military coup, this time led by Traoré.

Traoré’s coup led to the formation of several new movements in support of both his leadership and the Veille citoyenne (“citizen guards”), known as the Wayignans, which were established to defend the military regime and the transitional government both internally and externally. The mobilization encouraged by President Traoré and his supporters has increasingly divided Burkina Faso’s population, separating those who back the movement to “reclaim” the country – often labeled as patriots – from others, frequently described as “nonpatriots” and sometimes equated with terrorists. While protests against insecurity have long existed, they are now increasingly organized along ideological lines.

Performance of democratic institutions

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Commitment to democratic institutions

2

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The ousted interim presidents, Kaboré and Damiba, were blamed either for the worsening security situation or for failing to improve it. However, the widespread support for Traoré must be understood within a historical context: Since independence, President Kaboré (2015 – 2022) was the only elected president who was not a member of the military and did not come to power through a coup. Historically, the military has repeatedly aligned itself with the people, as seen in the 2014 popular uprising and the 2015 military coup against the Regiment of Presidential Security (Régiment de la Sécurité Présidentielle, RSP). These examples illustrate the long tradition of military coups in Burkina Faso, which has contributed to the perceived legitimacy of military regimes.

Additionally, factors such as the break with the former colonial power, efforts to strengthen the domestic market and the frequent invocation of Thomas Sankara's legacy have made the transitional president, Traoré, especially popular – particularly among the country's youth, who constitute the majority of the population.

5 | Political and Social Integration

Immediately after the coup in September 2022, the junta led by Traoré suspended political parties. They are only symbolically represented in the transitional assembly, with just 12 politicians. Since then, political parties have been systematically marginalized, with several prevented by the government from holding meetings. The number of political parties in Burkina Faso is also set to be restricted. Additionally, some politicians have been forcibly recruited as members of the VDP.

Burkina Faso has a vibrant and diverse civil society landscape. Civil society actors in the country include political parties, NGOs, associations, alliances, mass media, educational and information institutions, student associations, trade unions, human rights movements, youth and women's organizations, traditional leaders, religious communities, farmers' groups and self-help groups.

In addition to these more institutionalized groups, Burkina Faso has long had a wide variety of associations, coalitions and movements that advocate for different sociopolitical interests and respond to current developments in the country through various actions. However, they often have limited financial resources.

Since 2014, the influence of self-defense groups such as Koglweogo, Dozo and Ruuga has grown. Some Koglweogo and Dozo members are now integrated into the VDP, which was established in early 2020 at the initiative of former President Kaboré and has become a key pillar in the fight against terrorism under Traoré.

Many of the aforementioned organizations have openly aligned themselves with Traoré's patriotic movement or have tacitly condoned its actions. Meanwhile, some groups such as CISC and MBDHP have been silenced, and key figures have gone underground or into exile.

Party system

2



Interest groups

4



In recent years, numerous new movements have emerged. Few dare to protest against insecurity and terrorist attacks in their communities. Most current social movements support Traoré, the military junta and the transition while simultaneously rejecting France, ECOWAS, NATO, the Burkinabè currency (FCFA) and foreign military bases, advocating instead for closer ties with Russia. Many of these movements have been influenced by external actors. Additionally, internet activists and the Wayignans play a role in securing Traoré’s power.

The 2023 Afrobarometer survey, referencing data collected between 20 September and 12 October 2022 – during Damiba’s tenure – reveals that respondents have little trust in democratic structures but place significant confidence in state security forces, religious leaders and traditional authorities.

The interim president enjoys widespread popularity among most Burkinabè and is seen by many as Thomas Sankara 2.0. A genuine cult of personality has developed around Traoré, who seeks to decolonize Burkina Faso, promote self-determination, and combat corruption and embezzlement – all while opposing Western states and institutions, much as Sankara once did. This stance resonates strongly with many people.

Since 2015, the people of Burkina Faso have suffered from terrorism, which has spread across the country and rendered many areas and public services dysfunctional. Some citizens were disappointed by the conduct of the 2020 elections and by Kaboré’s leadership, particularly his handling of the fight against terrorism. For many, security is a higher priority than maintaining a functioning democracy with regular elections.

Amid Burkina Faso’s break with its former colonial power, its withdrawal from ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel, and the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) alongside the military juntas of Mali and Niger, discussions have increasingly emerged about developing an African model of democracy – one based on local realities and historical context rather than Western frameworks.

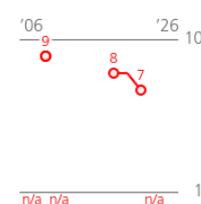
In recent years, surveillance and suspicion have steadily increased in response to terrorist attacks. The entire Fulani ethnic group has been broadly stigmatized and placed under general suspicion as collaborators or terrorists, leading to their exclusion from parts of society. Some members have been recruited into the VDP.

Human rights violations and massacres targeting the general population or specific communities have fostered widespread fear and mistrust, which in turn have fueled further violence.

Since Traoré’s rise to power and the growing polarization between so-called patriots and nonpatriots (regime critics), distrust has escalated even further. This has created such an atmosphere of intimidation that many critics no longer speak out for fear of being kidnapped or forcibly recruited.

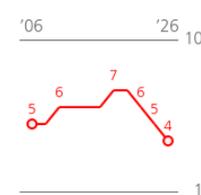
Approval of democracy

n/a



Social capital

4



Whistleblower organizations operating in the context of counter-terrorism, along with rallies, patrols and arbitrary checks by the so-called Wayignans, have also contributed to this atmosphere of fear. Under the policy of general mobilization, public sector employees, for example, can now be “recommended” for recruitment into the VDP.

II. Economic Transformation

6 | Level of Socioeconomic Development

Burkina Faso remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world. In 2021, about 40% of Burkina Faso’s population lived below the national poverty line, surviving on less than \$1.90 per day. Additionally, 70% of the population lived on an income of less than \$3.65 per day, a figure far below the global average for prosperity. Poverty and social exclusion remain widespread, particularly against the backdrop of the ongoing security crisis.

According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report 2022, Burkina Faso’s Human Development Index (HDI) score is 0.438, ranking 185th out of 191 countries. Compared to the previous year, the HDI score had declined slightly. Among Sahel region countries, Burkina Faso’s HDI is higher than that of Chad (186th), Niger (189th), the Central African Republic (188th) and South Sudan (191st), but slightly lower than Mali’s, which ranks one place higher.

Burkina Faso’s Human Capital Index score for 2023 is 0.39, indicating the country is losing about 61% of its potential human capital. This highlights significant challenges in education and health care. While no global rankings are available for 2023, Burkina Faso was ranked 155th out of 174 countries in the World Bank’s index for 2022, with a score of 0.38.

As of 2023, average life expectancy in Burkina Faso is about 61.3 years. This marks a significant improvement from 1950, when average life expectancy was about 33 years. Although there was a slight decline in 2022, this overall increase is attributable to advancements in health care, education and living conditions.

As of 2021, Burkina Faso’s Gini coefficient was 37.4, indicating a moderate level of income inequality. This suggests income inequality has decreased in recent years. However, significant disparities remain between urban and rural areas, between men and women and among certain communities such as the Fulani people. Rural populations and women are particularly affected by socioeconomic inequalities.

Question
Score

Socioeconomic
barriers

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In 2023, Burkina Faso's Gender Inequality Index (GII) score was 0.577, ranking the country 146th out of 170 countries. This score highlights persistent gender disparities, particularly in the areas of reproductive health, women's empowerment and economic participation. However, data indicate a gradual improvement in areas such as women's education, labor force participation and political representation.

Given that the military junta will remain in power in Burkina Faso until at least 2029 and social indicators remain weak despite slight improvements in some areas, it is unlikely the country will achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Economic indicators		2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP	\$ M	19697.5	18820.2	20324.6	23250.2
GDP growth	%	6.9	1.5	3.0	5.0
Inflation (CPI)	%	3.7	-	-	4.2
Unemployment	%	5.2	5.4	5.3	5.2
Foreign direct investment	% of GDP	-0.4	3.6	0.5	0.4
Export growth	%	13.4	-8.4	-2.2	-4.9
Import growth	%	7.5	6.1	12.8	15.8
Current account balance	\$ M	77.3	-1404.0	-1017.2	-
Public debt	% of GDP	55.5	59.2	56.8	57.2
External debt	\$ M	10295.7	9851.0	10397.4	-
Total debt service	\$ M	496.8	1074.2	859.7	-
Net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-7.6	-10.9	-6.7	-
Tax revenue	% of GDP	16.0	17.7	18.4	-
Government consumption	% of GDP	20.2	19.9	20.0	18.8
Public education spending	% of GDP	5.2	5.3	5.3	-
Public health spending	% of GDP	2.7	2.7	-	-
R&D expenditure	% of GDP	0.3	-	-	-
Military expenditure	% of GDP	2.3	3.0	4.0	-

Sources (as of December 2025): The World Bank, World Development Indicators | International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook | Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Military Expenditure Database.

7 | Organization of the Market and Competition

In 2024, Burkina Faso's Index of Economic Freedom score was 51.9, ranking it 134th out of 176 economies globally. This score places the country in the “mostly unfree” category, reflecting significant challenges in maintaining economic freedom. It falls below both the global average of 58.6 and the regional sub-Saharan African average of 52.4. Key factors contributing to this low ranking include weaknesses in the area of financial freedom, limited business freedom and inefficiencies in governance.

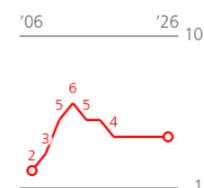
Market-based competition in Burkina Faso is developing but remains constrained by structural challenges. The agricultural sector is dominated by small-scale subsistence farming with limited market access. Cotton and gold are key industries but are prone to monopolistic tendencies. Informal employment is widespread – according to the most recent International Labour Organization (ILO) survey from 2023, about 95.2% of the country's workforce works in the informal sector. While the large informal economy fosters local competition, it lacks regulation, transparency and scalability. The formal sector, which is relatively small, is dominated by mining, telecommunications and retail. Small- and medium-sized enterprises face significant barriers, including limited access to credit and high operational costs. Although competition laws exist, they are weakly enforced due to corruption and inefficiency. Additionally, underdeveloped infrastructure hampers market efficiency and raises business costs. While access to credit remains limited, microfinance and mobile banking services are gradually expanding.

Regarding regional trade, Burkina Faso's membership in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) facilitates trade, though logistical challenges persist. However, the country's exit from ECOWAS is likely to disrupt its market organization by increasing trade barriers, expanding the informal economy and further isolating it economically. These challenges highlight the importance of regional cooperation for economic stability and development.

The potential abolition of the West African CFA franc (FCFA) in Burkina Faso would fundamentally reshape the country's market organization, presenting both opportunities and risks. While monetary independence could offer greater flexibility and a stronger sense of sovereignty, it could also bring significant challenges, including trade disruptions, inflation and reduced investor confidence. Effective governance, strong institutions and careful monetary management would be crucial to ensure a smooth transition and minimize economic instability.

Market
organization

4



Since 2022, there has been a noticeable deterioration in the area of competition policy. Following the military coup, government priorities have shifted toward security and economic self-reliance, taking precedence over market regulation. This shift has diverted attention from strengthening competition enforcement mechanisms.

Institutions responsible for ensuring fair competition, such as the WAEMU competition authority, face resource constraints and have limited capacity to monitor and enforce competition laws effectively. The weakened institutional framework makes it difficult to address anti-competitive practices consistently. Despite existing competition laws, effective market oversight has been lacking.

In sectors such as mining and energy, where market concentration is high, the absence of strong enforcement has enabled monopolistic behavior and reduced competition. The state has increasingly intervened in the economy, particularly in the mining sector – for example, through the nationalization of gold mines – which could further limit market competition. While these interventions aim to strengthen national control, they can also distort market dynamics and reduce incentives for competition.

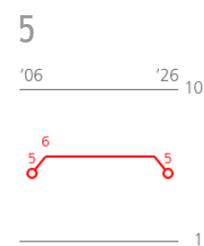
Despite newly introduced anti-corruption measures, corruption and political influence remain significant, particularly in cases involving powerful companies. The dominance of large firms in sectors such as mining, telecommunications and energy further restricts market competition. Additionally, informal economic activities and corruption distort market fairness and hinder effective regulation. Public procurement processes often lack transparency and favor larger or politically connected businesses.

The ongoing security crisis, marked by persistent terrorist attacks, remains a major obstacle to trade in the landlocked West African country. Since 2022, foreign trade liberalization in Burkina Faso has been limited due to political instability and security concerns following the military coup. The government’s focus has shifted toward the issues of internal security and political stability rather than further opening up the economy.

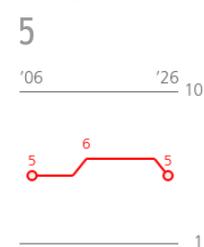
Key sectors such as gold mining have remained relatively liberalized, attracting foreign investment, but overall trade liberalization has slowed. Trade barriers and protectionist measures, particularly in agriculture, have been maintained. Since November 2022, the export of certain cereals has been banned and the import of wheat flour prohibited. Furthermore, under Traoré’s leadership, the government introduced collection quotas for the import of goods similar to those produced domestically and implemented tax exemptions for flour production to encourage national production and the industrial processing of domestic raw materials.

Security challenges and inadequate infrastructure also prevent Burkina Faso from fully benefiting from regional trade agreements. As a result, foreign trade liberalization has faced increasing constraints since 2022.

Competition policy



Liberalization of foreign trade



Burkina Faso’s withdrawal from ECOWAS would further hinder foreign trade liberalization. The country would face higher tariffs and trade barriers, lose preferential access to regional markets and encounter greater difficulties trading with neighboring countries. Foreign investment would likely decline, as Burkina Faso would no longer be part of the integrated ECOWAS market, making it less attractive to investors. Additionally, without regional economic integration, the country would struggle to negotiate favorable trade agreements, leading to higher import costs and limited export opportunities. Overall, withdrawal from ECOWAS would significantly slow the progress of foreign trade liberalization in Burkina Faso.

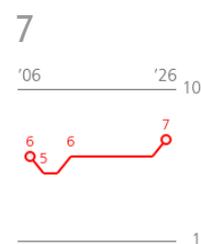
Since 2022, Burkina Faso has made significant strides in developing its banking system and capital markets. The establishment of state-owned financial institutions, such as the Banque des Dépôts du Trésor and the Banque Postale du Burkina Faso, marks a clear shift away from reliance on foreign financial institutions and toward greater financial independence.

The recent expansion of digital payment systems and the development of banking services targeting underserved populations – such as SMEs and rural communities – contrast with the more traditional banking models in place under Kaboré. These measures aim to integrate a larger segment of the population into the formal financial system.

Burkina Faso’s capital markets have gained momentum, with successful bond issuances demonstrating increased market engagement and investor confidence compared with the previous administration. The country’s participation in the regional bond market (WAEMU) and its growing market capitalization reflect a shift toward more active involvement in regional and international financial markets.

These efforts underscore Burkina Faso’s commitment to strengthening its financial infrastructure, enhancing economic independence and expanding access to financial services. The current transitional government appears to be taking a more proactive approach to bolstering financial infrastructure and promoting economic resilience – particularly through local institutions and digital platforms – compared to the slower and less comprehensive reforms of the previous regime.

Banking system



8 | Monetary and fiscal stability

Since 2022, Burkina Faso's monetary policy has been governed by the regional framework of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) as part of WAEMU. BCEAO's primary objectives are price stability and currency control, with the CFA franc pegged to the euro. While BCEAO continues to focus on inflation control and currency stability, political instability following the 2022 military coup has disrupted consistent monetary policy communication, leading to market uncertainty and reduced investor confidence.

After dropping to 0.7% in 2023, the inflation rate rose to 4.9% in December 2024, primarily because of higher food prices driven by irregular rainfall, insecurity and supply chain disruptions. Rising prices have strained household purchasing power, thus exacerbating food insecurity, which now affects nearly 25% of the population. Recent data suggests an upward inflation trend, indicating ongoing economic challenges. Historically, the inflation rate peaked at 18.2% in July 2022.

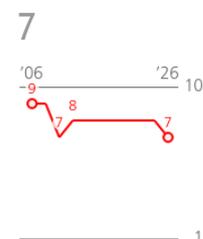
Despite the consistency of regional policy, domestic political and security challenges have hindered effective implementation. The government's focus on security and political concerns has limited efforts to improve monetary policy communication, creating uncertainty about stabilization measures. Additionally, economic challenges such as rising inflation and trade disruptions have been exacerbated by worsening security conditions, further complicating policy execution. Investor confidence remains low, with both foreign and domestic investments significantly affected.

In conclusion, while Burkina Faso remains aligned with BCEAO's regional monetary framework, political instability and security concerns have undermined the effective communication and implementation of a consistent monetary stabilization policy since 2022.

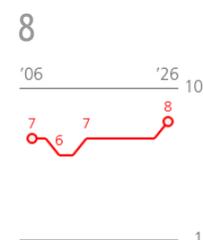
As of 2022, Burkina Faso's total debt service was approximately \$544 million. In 2023, public debt service was estimated at 9.9% of GDP, up from 9.1% in 2022. The current account deficit widened to 7.9% of GDP in 2023, compared to 7.2% in 2022. External debt stood at \$10.38 billion at the end of 2022, accounting for 44.5% of total debt – a decline of more than 10% since 2018. In 2023, total expenditure and net lending amounted to 28.9% of GDP, down from 35.5% in 2022.

Since the 2022 military coup, the Traoré government has pursued a fiscal policy aimed at stability, but has faced significant challenges. In 2024, the budget deficit is estimated at 4.6% of GDP, an improvement from 6.9% in 2023. The government has focused on reducing public debt and curbing nonessential spending while prioritizing security (13.7% of total spending in 2023), infrastructure and social programs. Efforts to boost revenue include intensified tax collection, anti-evasion measures and efforts to integrate the informal sector into the tax system.

Monetary stability



Fiscal stability



In 2023, government consumption reached 20% of GDP, marking an increase of more than 5% over the past decade. Public debt was projected to reach 57.4% of GDP in 2024, a slight rise from the previous reporting period. However, the economic growth rate is forecast at 5.5% in 2024. A cautious debt strategy is being pursued, leveraging regional financial markets, such as WAEMU bond issuances, to maintain debt sustainability.

In absolute terms, the current account balance was approximately -\$1.4 billion in 2022, a sharp decline from a \$77.3 million surplus in 2021. This deterioration resulted from reduced gold exports and rising import costs. Security challenges further disrupted agricultural production, worsening the trade balance.

Burkina Faso's fiscal balance has fluctuated significantly in recent years. In 2022, the country recorded a fiscal deficit of -9.2% of GDP. Projections indicate continued net borrowing, with deficits of -8.5% in 2023, -7.0% in 2024 and -6.5% in 2025. This reflects an ongoing fiscal gap where government spending exceeds revenue, necessitating borrowing.

The government works closely with international institutions, including the IMF and WAEMU, to improve fiscal management and carry out reforms aimed at long-term stability. These reforms focus on controlling expenditures, mobilizing revenue and increasing transparency.

Despite these efforts, fiscal stability remains fragile because of high security expenditures and the economic impact of climate change and food insecurity. Balancing immediate crisis response with long-term fiscal discipline remains a key challenge.

9 | Private Property

Since the January 2022 military coup, the Traoré government has struggled to uphold private property rights and regulate property transactions in Burkina Faso. Efforts to improve land management have been hampered by the ongoing security crisis, administrative inefficiencies, and a complex legal system that blends formal and customary laws.

The legal framework for property, largely unchanged since 2022, includes the Burkinabè constitution and the country's land laws, but enforcement remains weak. Reforms such as the National Land Policy (2015) and Land Tenure Reform (2018) aimed to modernize land governance but have advanced slowly due to financial constraints and insecurity.

The security crisis, particularly in the north and east, has displaced populations, led to illegal land occupations and complicated property transactions. In urban areas, bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption hinder property transactions, while in rural

Property rights

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areas, customary land rights often conflict with formal laws, and weak enforcement undermines land reforms.

Despite government efforts to regulate property use and improve land governance, progress has been limited by insecurity, illegal land occupations and mass displacement. Political instability has also disrupted collaborations with international organizations.

Institutional weaknesses, corruption and the lack of a transparent property registry have further delayed land tenure reforms. The government's capacity to regulate property rights and transactions remains especially limited in conflict-affected areas.

The country's economic landscape is dominated by SMEs, particularly in the informal sector.

According to the National File of Enterprises and Enterprise Groupings (Fichier National des Entreprises et Regroupement d'Entreprises, Fichier NERE) of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Burkina Faso (CCI-BF), nearly 80,000 companies and organizations are registered in the Trade and Mortgage Credit Register (Registre du Commerce et du Crédit Mobilier, RCCM).

As part of the *Projet d'Appui à la Transformation de l'Économie et à la Création d'Emploi (PATECE)*, supported by the African Development Bank, 13,500 new companies were registered by 2021. This data highlights a positive trend in business creation and registration in Burkina Faso in recent years.

In 2022 and 2023, the number of business startups continued to rise, particularly in agriculture, trade, services and small-scale industry – key sectors driving employment and economic activity despite challenging conditions.

Despite obstacles such as the security crisis, political instability and limited access to resources, Burkina Faso has demonstrated resilience in fostering entrepreneurship. New businesses are primarily concentrated in agriculture, services and trade.

Despite ongoing political and security instability, the government has remained committed to promoting entrepreneurship. Initiatives to support SMEs have expanded to facilitate the creation of new economic structures and encourage sustainable business growth.

Private enterprise

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10 | Welfare Regime

Social safety nets in Burkina Faso primarily address poverty, food insecurity and vulnerabilities to shocks such as climate change, economic crises and conflict-related displacement. Since 2022, Burkina Faso has made significant strides in expanding its social safety nets. Government spending on social assistance rose to approximately 2.6% of GDP by 2023, a substantial increase from just 0.3% in 2005. This level of expenditure exceeds the average for sub-Saharan African countries.

According to available data, the unemployment rate in Burkina Faso was estimated at 5.0% in 2023. With a population of about 22.75 million as of December 2023, this translates to nearly 1.14 million unemployed individuals. Women and young people in urban areas are particularly vulnerable to unemployment. Notably, there is no financial support system for job seekers in Burkina Faso.

As of the latest data, about 6.7% of Burkina Faso's population above the statutory pensionable age receives a pension, with a significant gender disparity: 3.9% of women and 10.3% of men are beneficiaries (UN, no year specified).

In December 2024, the transitional government introduced a universal health insurance system. In the formal economy, employees contribute 2.5% of their gross salary, matched by an additional 2.5% from employers. For those in the informal economy, the contribution is set at XOF 4,000, while pensioners pay 2%. The state covers the XOF 4,000 fee for individuals in need, and family members are also insured under the system.

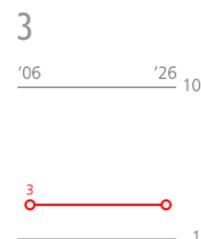
Burkina Faso has made notable progress in improving life expectancy in recent years. Life expectancy at birth rose from 51.9 years in 2000 (World Health Organization, WHO) to 59.8 years in 2022. In 2021, the government allocated 2.7% of GDP to health expenditure (World Bank), a figure that has steadily increased in recent years.

The Burkin-Naong-Sa Ya Social Safety Nets Project, supported by the World Bank, has provided critical assistance. By 2023, more than 1 million people had received support, including 763,714 individuals who benefited from cash transfers in response to social and economic shocks.

Despite these efforts, a significant portion of Burkina Faso's population remains outside the formal social security system. The government is actively working to expand social protection, particularly for informal workers, to close this gap. However, challenges persist in achieving comprehensive and efficient coverage.

Social safety nets target vulnerable populations, including the poor, women and children, but coverage remains limited to a fraction of those in need. Most informal sector workers, who make up a large share of the economy, still lack access to formal social protection.

Social safety nets



Women in Burkina Faso face significant challenges in accessing welfare benefits, with systemic barriers limiting their opportunities. Only 4.7% of mothers with newborns receive maternity cash benefits (UN, no year mentioned), highlighting the inadequacy of gender-specific welfare programs. Most women work in the informal sector, where social protections such as pensions, unemployment insurance and maternity leave are largely unavailable. Traditional gender roles further restrict women's access to education, formal employment and decision-making, reducing their ability to benefit from welfare systems. Women in rural areas are disproportionately excluded from welfare programs due to poor infrastructure, limited outreach and inadequate resource allocation.

The literacy rate for women in Burkina Faso has improved over time, reaching 29.12% in 2022 for adults aged 15 and above. However, the overall literacy rate stood at 34.49% in 2022, showing a slight decline from 2021. A significant gender gap persists, with men having a higher literacy rate than women, at 40.07% in 2022.

The gender parity index (GPI) scores are 1.0 for primary schools, 1.1 for secondary schools and 0.7 for graduate studies. These figures suggest that while gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary education, disparities remain at the tertiary education level, where enrollment among women lags behind that of males.

The gross enrollment ratio (GER) in Burkina Faso varies across educational levels. In 2023, the GER for primary education was 72.3%, a decline from 82.36% in 2022. The GER for secondary education was 30.9% in 2023, down from 33.72% in 2022. In contrast, the GER for tertiary education reached 9.73% in 2022, a slight increase from 9.36% in 2021. These figures indicate that while tertiary education enrollment has improved, GERs for primary and secondary education have worsened in recent years due to the security crisis and school closures. With the reopening of many schools, enrollment figures for 2024 and 2025 could see significant improvement.

Women make up about 45% of the total labor force in Burkina Faso, a proportion that has remained relatively steady over the past decade. This figure highlights both continued efforts and ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in the country's labor market.

Under Traoré's leadership, some progress has been made in promoting equal opportunities for women, particularly through social safety nets and economic inclusion programs. However, these efforts have been constrained by broader security and political challenges. While the government has prioritized addressing the immediate crisis, improvements in women's welfare remain limited and the overall impact on gender equality in welfare programs has been modest.

Equal opportunity

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11 | Economic Performance

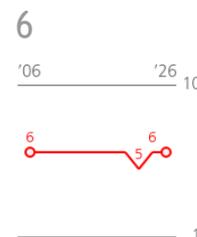
Since 2022, Burkina Faso's economic performance has shown modest improvement, but the country remains vulnerable due to significant structural, security and political challenges. GDP growth slowed to 1.8% in 2022 amid political instability and escalating violence but rebounded to 3.2% in 2023, driven primarily by a strong agricultural season. GDP per capita, adjusted for PPP, reached \$2,727 in 2023, continuing an upward trend over the past decade, though challenges persist. The services sector remains the dominant contributor to the economy, accounting for 44.9% of GDP, followed by agriculture at 31% and industry at 23.9%. Gross capital formation, which measures investment in physical assets, rose from 17.7% of GDP in 2022 to 22.6% in 2023, indicating a possible recovery. However, persistent insecurity, political instability and external shocks continue to constrain long-term growth.

As of 2023, Burkina Faso's unemployment rate stands at approximately 5.3%, remaining relatively stable in recent years but increasing steadily over the past decade. The youth unemployment rate (ages 15 – 24) was 7.7% in 2021, highlighting persistent challenges in employment opportunities for young people. A significant portion of the labor force is engaged in informal employment, particularly in agriculture, which may not be fully reflected in official unemployment statistics.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has fluctuated significantly, reflecting a volatile investment climate. FDI inflows stood at 3.6% of GDP in 2022 but declined sharply to 0.4% in 2023, influenced by political instability, security concerns and global economic conditions. The mining sector, particularly gold mining, remains a major recipient of foreign investment, alongside telecommunications, banking, agriculture, transport, logistics and energy. However, recent instability – including the arrest of mining executives in Mali, the junta's threats to revoke permits and the seizure of a French-operated uranium site in Niger – has heightened risks for investors. The mining sector remains a cornerstone of Burkina Faso's economy, generating significant export revenue and government income, but has faced setbacks due to militant violence, logistical challenges and government nationalizations.

Persistent security threats continue to hinder economic progress. Violence from Islamist militants has displaced nearly 10% of the population, disrupted key sectors such as agriculture and mining, and strained public resources due to increased defense spending. Political instability following two coups in 2022 has further dampened investor confidence. Reliance on gold and agriculture makes Burkina Faso highly vulnerable to commodity price fluctuations, climate variability and external shocks. Additionally, limited economic diversification, inadequate infrastructure and governance challenges pose long-term constraints to growth.

Output strength



12 | Sustainability

Under the Traoré regime in Burkina Faso, environmental concerns have tended to take a back seat to more immediate challenges such as security and political stability. Some initiatives and policies have been introduced to address environmental issues, though resources and policy priorities remain limited.

Burkina Faso faces significant challenges related to deforestation, erosion and desertification. Although the previous government considered reforestation and sustainable land management projects, these efforts were hindered by funding constraints, security threats and regional instability. The Traoré administration has inherited these challenges.

The country is highly vulnerable to climate change, experiencing droughts and heat waves that negatively impact agriculture, a key sector for the population. Although climate-resilient agricultural policies have been proposed, their effective implementation remains uncertain, as they require a stable institutional framework and substantial investment – resources that are often redirected toward security priorities.

Burkina Faso has received support from international organizations for environmental initiatives, but ongoing conflict with jihadist armed groups has diverted attention and resources from environmental efforts to national defense and security, limiting the effectiveness of some initiatives.

There are local and community-based efforts to raise awareness about environmental issues. However, these initiatives remain fragile in the face of pressing socioeconomic challenges such as poverty, population displacement and post-conflict national reconstruction.

The U.N. Education Index score, which reflects the country's educational attainment levels, fell slightly from 0.321 in 2020 to 0.302 in 2022.

According to the latest figures, public spending on education in 2022 was 5.3% of GDP, slightly higher than the average education spending of 127 countries between 2007 and 2008, which stood at 4.8% of GDP, although these figures are outdated. Spending on research and education amounted to only 0.3% of GDP in 2021, much lower than the average 2007 spending among OECD and EU countries of 2.0% of GDP. In 2023, Burkina Faso allocated approximately 20.3% of its total government expenditure to education, according to the World Bank. This allocation reflects the government's commitment to the education sector despite fiscal challenges.

As of 2022, Burkina Faso's adult literacy rate for ages 15 and above was 34.5%. In 2023, the country experienced a decline in primary education indicators. The gross primary school enrollment rate fell from 85.8% in 2022 to 74.4% in 2023, while the primary education completion rate decreased from 62.4% in 2022 to 54.6% in 2023.

Environmental
policy

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Education policy /
R&D

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It is important to note that the gross enrollment rate can exceed 100% when the number of enrolled students includes those outside the official age group for a given education level. The net enrollment rate, which accounts only for students of the official age group, provides a more precise measure of school participation. However, specific net enrollment data for 2023 is not currently available.

These declines are attributed to rising insecurity and population displacements within the country.

Under Traoré's leadership, Burkina Faso has implemented several measures to improve the education sector. After years of closures due to security concerns, more than 400 schools have reopened, allowing many students to resume their education. The government has initiated the construction of new educational facilities, particularly in rural areas, to enhance access to quality education. Additionally, innovative bioclimatic schools have been introduced to combat extreme heat, providing a more comfortable learning environment without the need for air conditioning.

These initiatives reflect a commitment to strengthening the education sector despite ongoing challenges such as security issues and internal displacement. The partial reopening of schools and the reduced number of internally displaced persons could positively affect educational outcomes from 2024 onward, though data for this period is not yet available.

Governance

I. Level of Difficulty

Burkina Faso has faced a series of structural challenges that have profoundly affected the governance capacity of political leaders since 2022. These challenges, rooted in the country's socioeconomic, political and security dynamics, have been exacerbated by regional instability and internal crises. As a result, the effectiveness of the state has been severely limited, increasing the complexity of political decision-making.

Since 2015, terrorist attacks by jihadist groups in the Sahel have escalated, with violence worsening after 2022. The state has lost control of more than 30% of its territory, disrupting public services, law enforcement and security. Resources have been redirected from development to military spending, undermining stability and public trust. The two military coups in 2022 exposed weak governance, fragile institutions and a lack of political consensus. Frequent coups have led to international sanctions and reduced aid, further isolating Burkina Faso. Distrust among political factions weakens policymaking and governance.

Burkina Faso remains one of the poorest countries, with more than 40% of its population living in poverty. High unemployment fuels discontent, while heavy reliance on foreign aid and limited economic diversification make the country vulnerable to external shocks. Sanctions and withdrawal from ECOWAS have worsened financial strains. Rising food and fuel prices due to global crises – including the war in Ukraine – have led to inflation, reduced purchasing power and increased social unrest.

By March 2023, more than 2 million people had been displaced due to conflict, overwhelming urban areas and state services. Health, education and housing systems struggle to cope, fueling grievances among both displaced populations and host communities. Food insecurity has worsened as agricultural productivity has declined due to displacement and violence.

Ethnic diversity and regional inequalities have contributed to social fragmentation. Marginalized communities harbor resentment, which armed groups exploit, intensifying intercommunal violence. Security forces are often perceived as favoring certain groups, deepening mistrust and hindering national unity. Burkina Faso is also affected by conflicts in Mali and Niger, which have facilitated extremist expansion. Regional cooperation remains weak due to shared crises, limiting stabilization efforts.

Structural
constraints

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Relations with international partners, particularly France, have deteriorated, prompting a pivot toward Russia, which brings geopolitical risks and legitimacy concerns.

Decades of underinvestment in governance, infrastructure and services have left institutions ill-equipped to address these crises. Corruption, inefficiency and weak decentralization hinder effective policy implementation, especially in conflict-affected rural areas. Public distrust in elites further complicates structural reforms.

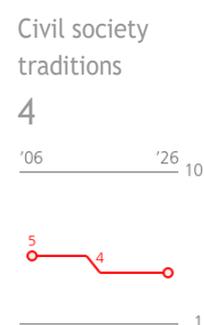
Burkina Faso's compounded crises have left the government struggling to restore stability, deliver essential services and regain public trust. Without political consensus, economic recovery and improved security coordination, governance capacity will remain severely constrained.

Burkina Faso has a vibrant, diverse civil society landscape. Civil society actors in the country include political parties, NGOs, associations, alliances, mass media, educational institutions, student associations, trade unions, human rights movements, youth organizations, women's organizations, traditional leaders, religious communities, farmers' groups and self-help groups.

Some civil society organizations have existed since independence. Despite past regimes' attempts at co-optation, these organizations have historically played a key role in driving democratization, particularly through protests against economic hardship, impunity and political oppression. Under Blaise Compaoré, civil society mobilized against corruption, the high cost of living and the extension of the president's rule, ultimately contributing to his resignation in 2014. In mid-September 2015, widespread protests erupted in response to the attempted military coup by the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP) under Gen. Gilbert Diendéré.

Since 2019, numerous local initiatives have emerged to support internally displaced persons, including fundraising campaigns. As terrorist attacks have spread across Burkina Faso, press conferences and protests have been organized in major cities and municipalities to raise awareness of the worsening security situation.

Since the military coup led by Traoré, civil society organizations have faced significant restrictions. Fearing reprisals such as the kidnapping of activists, many have reduced their activities to a minimum, especially after a resolution was passed under Traoré allowing NGOs to be stripped of their eligibility. Numerous leaders of social movements, trade unions and human rights organizations have been threatened and forcibly recruited as VDP members through abductions. The degree of repression under Traoré has surpassed that under the Compaoré regime (1987 – 2014), which was notorious for ordering political assassinations to silence critics.



Political, social, ethnic and religious conflicts in Burkina Faso are deeply interconnected, contributing to a complex crisis that has escalated in recent years.

The period under review has seen a significant increase in violent incidents compared to previous years. Since 2015, the number, geographical spread and brutality of terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso have risen exponentially.

Since 2022, the country has been ruled by a military junta led by Ibrahim Traoré. Despite official claims of efforts to improve security, attacks by Islamist groups persist. Because of the repressive nature of the military regime, there are virtually no official statistics on attacks, fatalities or kidnappings. Nevertheless, some particularly violent incidents have not been concealed from the public. For example, in June 2024, Katiba Hanifa (a faction of JNIM) killed 112 state security forces and 60 civilians in Mansila (Yagha Province). In August 2024, Ansaroul Islam carried out the deadliest attack since the insurgency began, killing up to 400 people in Barsalogo (Sanmatenga Province), including 208 state security personnel.

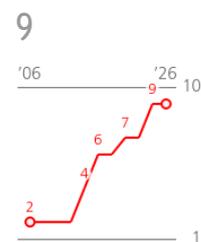
In 2024, Burkina Faso was ranked first on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), making it the country most affected by terrorism for the first time. Deaths from terrorism increased by 68% to 1,907, accounting for one-quarter of all terrorism-related deaths worldwide. While the absolute number of fatalities rose, the number of attacks decreased by 17%. Armed groups controlled 60% of Burkina Faso's territory in 2022, but by the end of 2024, this share had dropped to 29.41%.

Although the government claims that the numbers of IDPs and closed schools have fallen, these figures remain high. As of December 2024, there were still 1 million IDPs, and by June 2024, 4,000 schools remained closed. According to a WHO report, as of December 31, 2023, 485 health facilities were either closed, destroyed or functioning at minimal capacity. In 2025, the humanitarian community estimates that 5.9 million people would require assistance, down from 6.3 million the previous year.

Since 2022, human rights violations by state security forces and their auxiliary units, the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP), have escalated. In April 2023, 146 people were killed in the village of Karma (Yatenga Province). In November 2023, up to 100 people were massacred in Zaongo (Namentenga Province). In February 2024, 223 people were killed in several villages between Ouahigouya and Thiou (Yatenga Province). In July 2024, disturbing videos circulated on social media allegedly showing state security forces and VDP members engaging in acts of cannibalism against killed insurgents.

The security situation is further destabilized by increased civilian killings and attacks on local populations, particularly the Fulani community. Civilians are often targeted based on suspicions of jihadist affiliation, collaboration or reluctance to form VDP units in their communities. Some are targeted simply for residing near jihadist-controlled areas or for failing to provide the military with information – or for

Conflict intensity



providing the “wrong” information. The Fulani, in particular, were systematically excluded from VDP recruitment in both 2020 and 2022. Widespread threats and massacres push many into the ranks of terrorist groups in order to seek either protection or revenge, fueling a cycle of violence and further eroding social cohesion.

The Traoré regime denies allegations of human rights abuses by state security forces, attributing them instead to terrorists disguised in Burkinabè military uniforms. Not a single case has been investigated or brought to justice. The state’s monopoly on the use of force has effectively been outsourced to self-defense militias, and its failure to prosecute human rights violations indirectly legitimizes such actions. While tens of thousands of VDP members have been mobilized to combat insecurity, their abuses against civilians have paradoxically fueled further violence, triggering cycles of revenge among armed groups.

The Traoré regime responds to criticism by banning or expelling journalists and diplomats or by suspending media outlets. Reports of massacres from human rights organizations have been met with the arrest of civil society leaders.

Since 2023, press freedom and freedom of expression have been severely restricted. Critics of the regime have faced threats, disappearances, arrests or forced recruitment. At the same time, state-sponsored disinformation campaigns have spread across social media. President Traoré has adopted nationalist rhetoric centered on patriotic values while criminalizing dissent, dividing society into “patriots” and “nonpatriots.” In response to ongoing coup attempts and mutinies, new movements and organizations such as the Wayignans have emerged to defend the military regime and the transitional government both domestically and internationally.

Since Traoré took power, suspicion, mistrust, agitation and slander have compounded an already volatile climate of fear, driven by years of terrorist attacks, violence and marginalization.

II. Governance Performance

14 | Steering Capability

The primary focus of Traoré’s government has been addressing the deteriorating security situation and fighting corruption. The administration has prioritized strengthening the armed forces and mobilizing the VDP. This strategy includes training and equipping thousands of civilian volunteers to fight insurgents.

Traoré’s government has also emphasized reducing reliance on France and other Western powers, instead seeking partnerships with countries such as Russia and exploring regional cooperation.

As a military-led government, the state’s decision-making has been highly centralized with limited consultation with civilian stakeholders, a model that risks alienating key segments of society. Structural weaknesses, resource constraints and ongoing conflicts hinder its ability to address broader issues such as humanitarian relief, economic development and institutional reform. Without significant improvements in governance capacity and international support, the government’s ability to sustain its strategic priorities remains uncertain.

Although specific initiatives have been launched under Traoré’s leadership, there is no unified, comprehensive document defining Burkina Faso’s development policy for the current period. The measures implemented build on previous efforts while integrating new approaches, such as the Programme de l’Entrepreneuriat Communautaire par Actionnariat Populaire, launched in June 2023. This program, implemented by the Agence pour la Promotion de l’Entrepreneuriat Communautaire (APEC) in partnership with the Société Coopérative “Bâtir l’Avenir” (SCOOP-CA/BA), aims to promote endogenous and inclusive development by directly involving citizens in community entrepreneurial projects.

In March 2023, the European Union approved a multiyear action plan for Burkina Faso, allocating €153 million in funding for 2023 – 2025. The plan includes four main actions to support various areas of national development.

Question
Score

Prioritization

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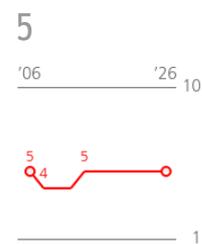
The Traoré government has demonstrated moderate effectiveness in implementing its policies, particularly in the security domain, where it has achieved tangible results in reclaiming territory from armed groups. However, its performance in other areas – such as humanitarian relief, economic development and governance reforms – remains low to moderate, primarily due to resource constraints, institutional weaknesses and an overreliance on military solutions.

While the government has made progress in aligning its policies with national priorities, the sustainability of its achievements depends on addressing systemic challenges, including institutional reform, inclusivity and the root causes of insecurity. Without significant improvements in these areas, the overall effectiveness of policy implementation will remain limited.

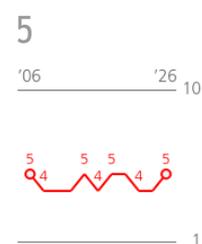
Under Traoré, Burkina Faso has shown a moderate capacity to learn from past policies, particularly by adapting its military strategy and emphasizing national sovereignty. The government has made progress with regard to reclaiming territory from insurgents and strengthening the VDP, reflecting some responsiveness to previous security failures.

However, its ability to set effective priorities remains limited. The administration is overly focused on security while neglecting critical areas such as humanitarian aid, governance reform and economic diversification. Weak institutions, resource constraints and a lack of long-term planning continue to hinder broader progress. Sustainable development requires addressing these systemic issues alongside security efforts.

Implementation



Policy learning



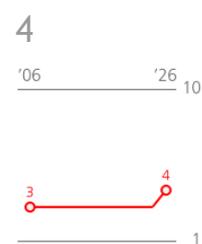
15 | Resource Efficiency

Under President Traoré, the government has prioritized transparency and accountability in public financial management. Regular audits of ministries and the mandatory publication of expenditure reports have been implemented to ensure a clear trail for tracking public funds. This approach enhances institutional credibility by ensuring announced projects are effectively executed.

Additionally, the administration has intensified its fight against corruption by enforcing strict penalties for offenders. A strong legal framework, combined with increased oversight from regulatory bodies, has led to a significant reduction in financial misconduct and mismanagement within the administration.

In a landmark decision reshaping Burkina Faso’s economic landscape, Traoré announced the clearance of the country’s \$4.7 billion external debt while also taking control of its lucrative gold mining industry. The nationalization of the gold sector aims to ensure profits are reinvested in critical areas such as education, health care and infrastructure, directly benefiting the population.

Efficient use of assets



The government has also prioritized human resource development by increasing civil servants' salaries by 50% while reducing the salaries of ministers and parliamentarians by 30% – a move intended to promote fairness and equality. Significant investments have been made in agriculture to boost production and support rural stakeholders.

To address urban-rural disparities, the government has adopted a decree to implement an ambitious rural electrification strategy aiming to achieve a 50% rural electrification rate by 2028. This initiative is expected to improve living conditions, promote local economic development and strengthen essential services in rural communities.

While these initiatives reflect a concerted effort to optimize resource allocation, their long-term success will depend on sustained implementation and the government's ability to navigate internal and external challenges.

The military-led government under Traoré faces significant challenges in coordinating conflicting policy objectives into a coherent strategy. The lack of a solid democratic framework complicates this process, as the administration must balance internal and external pressures, including security concerns, economic difficulties, political instability and the need for international legitimacy.

Several key conflicts arise in policy coordination: While military rule may provide short-term stability, it risks alienating civilians and international partners who advocate democratic governance. The government's prioritization of military expenditures limits resources available for infrastructure, health care and education, creating tension between national security and broader development goals.

Overall, there has been a decline in the perception of corruption in Burkina Faso. In a recent survey, 65.77% of respondents said corruption is common, compared to 85.23% in 2021 – a decrease of 20%.

Following his coup, Traoré prioritized combating corruption and terrorism, quickly approving a national strategy to prevent and fight corruption. Under his leadership, Burkina Faso has launched several anti-corruption measures targeting the National Assembly, ministries, public service institutions, the customs service and the judiciary.

However, according to the 2023 report by the National Anti-Corruption Network (REN-LAC), the municipal police, customs and national police remain the most corrupt institutions – a trend unchanged since 2021. Despite this, Traoré has taken no concrete steps to combat corruption within the state security forces, likely due to his reliance on their support to maintain power.

The press played a crucial role in exposing corruption and poor governance throughout 2023. However, with increased restrictions on press freedom and the persecution of journalists and media outlets, its role in holding the government accountable is expected to diminish.

Policy coordination

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Anti-corruption policy

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In January 2024, Traoré reaffirmed his commitment to fighting corruption in public administration through the Supreme Authority for State Control and the Fight Against Corruption (ASCE-LC), which was originally formalized in 2015. Initial audits focused on the National Assembly, ministries and state institutions, with judiciary audits set to begin in July 2024.

To encourage public participation, Traoré signed a decree in March 2024 allowing citizens to report acts of corruption in the public sector, signaling a desire for greater civic involvement in anti-corruption efforts. He has publicly emphasized that corruption is a major obstacle to national development.

Despite these initiatives, reports suggest corruption remains widespread. The 2023 U.S. Department of State’s Country Report on Human Rights Practices highlighted an increase in corruption cases, indicating the problem persists. Additionally, concerns have arisen regarding the government’s response to dissent, with allegations that the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) has been involved in the abduction of individuals critical of the regime – raising fears of power misuse.

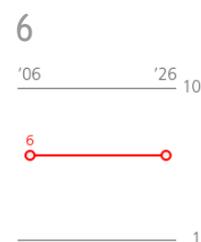
While Traoré’s government has taken notable steps – including public declarations, strategic nationalizations and institutional audits – corruption remains deeply entrenched in Burkina Faso. Key challenges include insufficient resources, weak institutions, and entrenched networks of patronage and clientelism, all of which hinder meaningful progress.

It is important to recognize that the fight against corruption is a long-term process that requires consistent effort and systemic reform. The effectiveness of Traoré’s measures will become fully evident only over time.

16 | Consensus-Building

When Traoré came to power in September 2022 through a military coup, he presented himself as a leader focused on stabilizing the country and addressing urgent security challenges. His government is transitional, with the stated aim of restoring civilian rule. Elections were initially scheduled for July 2024 but were later postponed to July 2029, with the possibility of his candidacy. It is important to note that the most recent presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2020, while the last municipal elections took place in 2016. Traoré’s primary focus has been combating jihadist violence and restoring territorial integrity. However, his administration has often justified suspending democratic norms – for instance by restricting political opposition and protests – as being necessary for national stability. This raises doubts about his commitment to democracy as a long-term goal. Most political parties in Burkina Faso advocate democratic governance, but they have been largely sidelined under Traoré’s transitional government. Similarly, civil society organizations, which have historically played a vocal role in demanding democracy, now face threats,

Consensus on goals



intimidation, arrests and forced recruitment of their leaders into the VDP. A key challenge to a democratic return is Traoré's popularity among young people, largely due to improvements in security, anti-corruption efforts, economic measures to strengthen the domestic market and moves to assert national sovereignty – such as breaking ties with France and withdrawing from ECOWAS. At the same time, political opponents have been silenced, leading to minimal resistance against authoritarian and anti-democratic tendencies. The military's historical role further complicates the situation. While the government was democratically elected in 2016 and 2020, all other leaders since independence have come to power through military coups. For many Burkinabè, military takeovers have become a recurring political phenomenon, reinforcing trust in the armed forces as a governing institution.

The Traoré administration has acknowledged the need to address economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment and inequality. However, economic concerns have often been overshadowed by security issues. Under Traoré's presidency, Burkina Faso has launched substantial economic reforms, placing industrialization at the center of its economic policy. Major initiatives include:

- Construction of a 2.5 million-ton-per-year cement factory.
- Expansion of a cotton processing plant.
- Development of new factories for tomato concentrate, cooking oil and soft drinks.

These projects aim to boost the national economy and create jobs. Traoré's government appears to favor a strong state role in the economy, implementing import and export bans as part of a pragmatic approach to address immediate socioeconomic grievances rather than fully embracing a liberal market economy. While these initiatives reflect a desire to modernize the economy and reduce import dependency, they remain aligned with certain market economy principles. However, their long-term success will depend on effective governance, investment and stability.

The situation in Burkina Faso presents a complex challenge for reformers navigating a landscape dominated by anti-democratic actors, including authoritarian leaders, armed groups and factions opposed to democratic governance.

The country is grappling with a severe security crisis, fueled by jihadist insurgencies, militias and communal conflicts. These groups exploit the state's weak presence, widespread grievances and socioeconomic vulnerabilities. In many rural areas, some of these non-state actors wield de facto power, further undermining democratic governance and eroding state authority.

The military-led government, which seized power through a series of coups, has used the security crisis to justify its rule, presenting itself as a necessary stabilizing force. This has created tension between democratization efforts and immediate security needs.

With the military in power since the 2022 coup, reformers must navigate a system dominated by anti-democratic forces, facing the challenge of either working within or resisting this structure. The military leadership has shown reluctance to fully commit to a democratic transition.

Anti-democratic actors

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Burkina Faso's crisis is part of a broader wave of instability in the Sahel. While external actors such as ECOWAS advocate for democratic transitions, their influence remains limited due to widespread anti-Western sentiment and the government's security-first approach.

Traoré's ability to moderate divisive conflicts in Burkina Faso is influenced by several key factors. Burkina Faso is home to more than 60 ethnic groups, which have historically coexisted peacefully. However, insecurity, resource disparities and jihadist violence have strained these relations, deepening societal divisions. Ineffective governance and widespread corruption further erode trust in state institutions, making conflict resolution more challenging. Traoré has prioritized national unity, counter-terrorism efforts through local militias (especially the VDP) and a diversification of international alliances so as to assert Burkina Faso's sovereignty. These actions have bolstered his credibility among the youth and strengthened support for his nationalist stance. However, Traoré's heavy reliance on military solutions risks exacerbating ethnic tensions while failing to address the root causes of division, such as unequal resource distribution and socioeconomic grievances. The absence of accountability for abuses and ethnic targeting further fuels distrust and resentment, undermining long-term stability.

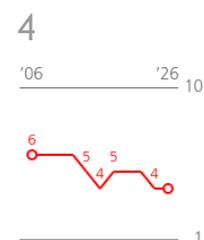
After his coup, Traoré pledged to restore constitutional order and involve civil society in the transition process. Initially, consultations were held to gather public input on shaping the transition. However, these consultations have been limited, as the government primarily engages with groups that align with its agenda.

The participation of NGOs and civil society in policymaking – particularly in the realms of security and justice – remains uneven and often subordinate to Traoré's policies. Consultations with representatives have largely served to legitimize predetermined decisions, leaving little room for genuine pluralistic debate.

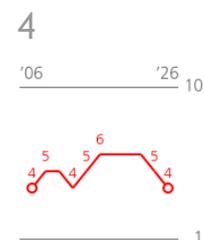
Moreover, engagement with civil society actors is often dictated by national security priorities, leading to the marginalization of certain groups in discussions on broader social, economic and political issues. Civil society voices advocating for democratic reforms, human rights or political inclusivity are frequently excluded from meaningful participation.

Under Traoré's leadership, several measures have been implemented to enhance social cohesion and promote national reconciliation. In a move to strengthen national identity and break from colonial legacies, the government has replaced traditional judicial robes and school uniforms with garments made from the local Faso Dan Fani fabric. Other measures include the Journée des coutumes et traditions and the designation of national languages as official languages. This initiative underscores a commitment to cultural heritage and national pride.

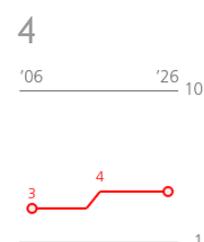
Cleavage / conflict management



Public consultation



Reconciliation



In December 2024, the Legislative Transitional Assembly (ALT) approved an amnesty law pardoning soldiers involved in the failed 2015 coup, citing their role in fighting terrorism. While this decision is intended to promote national reconciliation, it risks encouraging future coups and undermining the rule of law.

Meanwhile, Burkina Faso's history of high-profile trials – such as those for the 2015 coup, Sankara's 1987 murder and other political crimes – suggests a potential trial for journalist Norbert Zongo's 1998 murder. Efforts to extradite François Compaoré, a key suspect, have faced setbacks, straining relations between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. A trial could heighten tensions amid a government crackdown on press freedom.

Unlike his deposed predecessors Kaboré and Damiba, Traoré rejects negotiations and ceasefires with terrorists. The return of internally displaced persons and humanitarian assistance as well as security sector reforms can also contribute to national reconciliation and strengthen social cohesion. However, these efforts are significantly hampered by human rights violations committed by state security forces and the VDP, which remain unprosecuted, as well as by the ongoing stigmatization of the Fulani community.

17 | International Cooperation

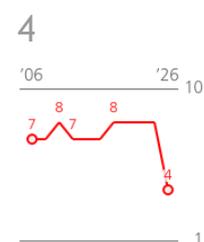
Burkina Faso is undergoing a strategic realignment in its international relations, focusing on regional cooperation and protecting its sovereignty.

Recently, Burkina Faso annulled its military agreement with France, leading to the withdrawal of French troops from the country in February 2023. In response, France, Luxembourg and Sweden also terminated their development cooperation efforts. While Germany did not completely end its development cooperation after the 2022 military coup, it significantly restructured its approach, shifting support to non-governmental and regional partners to assist the local population without engaging directly with the ruling junta.

The EU partially suspended its financial support, permitting emergency and humanitarian aid to continue while halting broader development programs due to governance concerns. The United States also suspended most nonhumanitarian aid in line with legal restrictions that prohibit support for governments that come to power through military coups. However, humanitarian assistance was unaffected.

At the same time, Burkina Faso has strengthened ties with authoritarian and socialist-leaning states, including Iran, Türkiye and China, with cooperation focused on infrastructure and medical support. Russia has emerged as a key partner, particularly in the areas of nuclear energy and military support.

Effective use of support



In collaboration with Niger and Mali, which are also military-led governments, Burkina Faso has established the AES, a confederation aimed at enhancing regional security and self-reliance. The alliance has formed a joint armed force of 5,000 soldiers equipped with aircraft, military equipment and intelligence resources to combat security threats in the Sahel region, particularly the rise of extremist violence.

This shift marks a clear departure from ECOWAS, which all three countries have left. Instead, they are working toward closer cooperation to reinforce sovereignty and reduce dependence on external influences.

These developments highlight Burkina Faso's efforts to diversify its international partnerships, prioritize collective security and strengthen economic cooperation, while moving away from traditional West African blocs.

Given the recent nature of these changes, it remains uncertain how Burkina Faso's long-term development strategy will evolve.

Burkina Faso's credibility in international relations is currently undermined by several factors.

The restructuring of international cooperation under Traoré makes it difficult at this stage to assess the credibility of partnerships with new allies such as China, Iran, Türkiye and Russia.

Relations with Western countries, particularly France, have deteriorated significantly. The military government under President Traoré has also imposed press restrictions, blocking numerous international media outlets after they reported on alleged human rights violations by the Burkinabè army. These violations, which contravene international humanitarian law, have raised serious concerns within the global community.

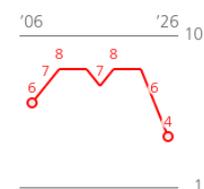
Traoré has taken other measures that cast doubt on Burkina Faso's adherence to international conventions. Notably, in December 2024, the government passed an amnesty law granting pardon to soldiers involved in the failed 2015 military coup. In July 2024, the military regime also introduced legislation to criminalize homosexuality. If enacted, this law would directly violate international human rights conventions to which Burkina Faso is a signatory.

As a result of the 2022 military coup, the establishment of a transitional government under military rule, the postponement of elections to 2029 and an increasingly authoritarian and repressive trajectory, Burkina Faso has lost significant trust among the Western international community.

Despite having signed numerous international conventions, Burkina Faso struggles with implementation, particularly in the areas of human rights and security.

Credibility

4



In addition to leaving ECOWAS, Burkina Faso withdrew from the G5 Sahel organization in December 2023, leading to the group's dissolution shortly after. However, Burkina Faso remains a member of WAEMU, which is headquartered in Ouagadougou. The organization includes seven other francophone West African countries: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.

Despite their exit from ECOWAS, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger established the AES in September 2023, signaling a shift toward regional cooperation outside traditional West African blocs.

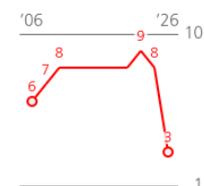
Relations with neighboring Ghana deteriorated in December 2022 after former Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo allegedly claimed to have granted a mining license to the Wagner Group. However, in January 2025, Burkinabè President Traoré attended the inauguration of Ghana's newly elected president, John Dramani Mahama, potentially signaling efforts to restore diplomatic ties.

From November 2018 to October 2022, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire conducted joint counter-terrorism operations. However, relations between the two countries have since deteriorated, with both accusing each other of destabilization efforts. In September 2024, Burkina Faso recalled all its diplomatic staff from Côte d'Ivoire, further straining bilateral ties. This marks a significant decline in relations between two nations that were once historically, culturally, politically and economically intertwined.

Tensions have also arisen between Burkina Faso and Benin. In July 2024, Traoré accused Benin of hosting French military bases allegedly meant to destabilize Burkina Faso.

Regional cooperation

3



Strategic Outlook

The government's security efforts have produced some successes but at the expense of democratic freedoms and human rights. The lack of elections until 2029, tight press restrictions and judicial interference raise serious concerns about the country's future governance.

Criticism of the current government is virtually impossible, as dissenting voices from political parties, civil society organizations and the media are heavily suppressed. Criticism from the international community is met with diplomatic summons, and in some cases has led to a complete breakdown in cooperation.

The current situation and the measures enacted leave little room for a gradual return to democracy. Elections have been postponed to July 2029. With the amendment of the transitional charter in May 2024, it was decided that Traoré would be allowed to run in these elections. Given his current popularity among the population, an election is feasible and could potentially result in the emergence of another long-term ruler, justified by the ongoing fight against terrorism and corruption. As only a few politicians are currently represented in the Legislative Transitional Assembly (ALT) and political activities remain prohibited, it is strongly recommended that political engagement be reinstated – particularly in preparation for the election campaign. Additionally, clear provisions should be established to ensure that the transitional period – and consequently the final term of office for Ibrahim Traoré – ends in July 2029.

Furthermore, it is possible that a new constitution, entirely separate from the current French model, will be drafted and adopted in the coming years. However, it remains uncertain whether it will retain authoritarian elements.

Since Traoré assumed office as interim president at the end of September 2022, there have been nine attempted coups and mutinies (as of January 31, 2025). It is likely that further attempts will be made before the announced end of the transition in 2029. These coup attempts will further divide society and may lead to increased repression within Burkina Faso as well as heightened tensions with other countries. This underscores the urgent need to end threats, arbitrary arrests and forced recruitment, as well as to curb the severe restrictions on freedom of expression and press freedom. Additionally, efforts to monitor and counter disinformation must be expanded.

The contracts of many VDP members will expire in 2025. To prevent unemployed security forces from organizing into criminal networks, and to ensure their disarmament, urgent measures are needed to support their sustainable integration and reduce the risk of abuse.

Although the fight against terrorism has been partially successful, with some areas recaptured, terrorist attacks are becoming increasingly brutal and violent. This reinforces what has long been known: purely military solutions have limited effectiveness. It is therefore recommended that the transitional government implement targeted measures to combat radicalization, generate income opportunities and strengthen social cohesion. Addressing long-standing social conflicts and fostering reconciliation will be critical in achieving lasting stability.

Moreover, human rights violations committed by state security forces and the VDP must be effectively investigated and prosecuted to end impunity and break the cycle of violence. The autonomy of the judiciary must be urgently restored, and new capacities for effective and transparent prosecution as well as for combating corruption in all sectors must be established.

On January 29, 2025, Burkina Faso, along with other member states, withdrew from ECOWAS. Although the withdrawal has been finalized, ECOWAS has granted the three AES countries a six-month extension to reconsider their decision. It would be advisable to use this period to undertake a joint review and reinterpretation of the ECOWAS statutes to better reflect the current realities and needs of West African nations.

Although the economic reforms are ambitious, they remain fragile due to limited foreign investment, international isolation and ongoing security risks. Striking a balance between state control and private sector involvement is advisable in order to foster competition and attract responsible investment. With nearly 80% of the Burkinabè population engaged in agriculture, the government should prioritize investments in modern and climate-resilient farming methods to mitigate food insecurity, which has been worsened by displacement and economic shocks.