Full Length Research

Counter-Terrorism Strategies and Military Governance: Insights from Burkina Faso's Leadership Transition

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Abstract

This study examines the discursive constructions surrounding counter-terrorism strategies and military governance during Burkina Faso's leadership transition. Drawing on official documents, media narratives, and scholarly sources, the research analyzes how language, symbolism, and storytelling shape perceptions of security, legitimacy, and state identity (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 2007). Through thematic and discursive analysis, the study uncovers underlying ideological frameworks and power dynamics that influence policy formulation and regional security discourse (Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Campbell, 1998).

Keywords: Counter-Terrorism, Military Governance, Burkina Faso's Leadership Transition,

1: INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Burkina Faso has become a crucial case study in the realms of counter-terrorism strategies and military governance, particularly in the context of the broader security challenges facing the Sahel region. Following the military coup in 2015, which ousted President Blaise Compaoré, Burkina Faso transitioned to a democratic regime in 2016 under the leadership of Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. This transition aimed not only to restore democratic institutions but also to address the escalating threats posed by extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated organizations operating within its borders (International Crisis Group, 2018). The necessity for effective counter-terrorism measures became more pressing as violence surged in the region, highlighting the need for a comprehensive strategy that balances military actions with governance reforms (Kalyango, 2019).

The strategic responses of Burkina Faso to counter-terrorism have been significantly influenced by regional dynamics and international partnerships. The involvement of foreign powers, particularly France and the United States, has led to increased military assistance and training for Burkinabe forces, fostering a militarized

approach to security (Mazzocchi, 2020). However, this militarization raises critical questions about the efficacy of such strategies in promoting long-term stability and peace. Critics argue that a heavy reliance on military solutions can undermine democratic governance and civil liberties, potentially fueling further instability (Bøås, 2018). Therefore, understanding the relationship between military governance and counter-terrorism is essential for evaluating the overall trajectory of Burkina Faso's political landscape.

Moreover, the leadership transition in 2016 provided an opportunity to assess the impact of governance reforms on counter-terrorism efforts. Kaboré's administration attempted to implement policies aimed at enhancing civil-military relations and promoting community engagement in security matters. These initiatives were designed to counteract the narrative of extremist groups by fostering trust between local populations and the state (Ouedraogo, 2020). However, challenges remain, as reports indicate that military operations often lead to civilian casualties, exacerbating grievances that extremist groups exploit for recruitment (Berthe, 2019). The tension between military

effectiveness and respect for human rights continues to complicate the government's counter-terrorism strategy.

In conclusion, the case of Burkina Faso illustrates the complex interrelationship between military governance and counter-terrorism strategies in the context of democratic transitions. As the country confronts ongoing security threats, the lessons learned from its leadership transition and the ongoing challenges it faces provide important insights for both scholars and policymakers. A nuanced understanding of these dynamics is essential for developing sustainable solutions that not only address immediate security concerns but also promote long-term democratic governance and community resilience in the face of terrorism.

1.1 Background

Burkina Faso, a landlocked nation in West Africa, has increasingly become a focal point for security concerns in the Sahel region, particularly due to a surge in terrorist activities. The rise of extremist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State has exacerbated political and social instability, leading to a humanitarian crisis that affects millions. According to the International Crisis Group (2020), the deterioration of security has roots in regional conflicts, ethnic tensions, and the proliferation of arms, which have collectively undermined state authority and public safety. This situation poses a significant challenge not only for Burkina Faso but for neighboring nations as well, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies.

The political landscape of Burkina Faso underwent a transformative shift in 2015 when long-time President Blaise Compaoré was ousted amid widespread protests against his attempts to extend his rule. This leadership transition initiated a period of uncertainty characterized by the struggle for democratic governance and the reinvention of national security policies (Hagmann & Péclard, 2011). The transitional government faced the dual challenge of managing a fragile political environment while addressing rising security threats. This pivotal moment highlighted the importance of aligning military strategies with democratic principles, as the newly formed leadership sought to stabilize an increasingly volatile society.

In the aftermath of Compaoré's departure, Burkina Faso witnessed an increase in violent extremist incidents, which has necessitated a reevaluation of its military governance and counter-terrorism framework. Research by Zongue (2020) indicates that the lack of effective civilian oversight and accountability in the military has hampered the government's ability to combat terrorism effectively. The military's responses have often been criticized for human rights violations, further alienating local populations and complicating efforts at fostering trust between communities and state authorities. Such

dynamics not only perpetuate cycles of violence but also undermine the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens.

To address these multifaceted challenges, Burkina Faso has engaged in collaborations with regional and international partners, including the G5 Sahel Joint Force and France's military operations in the region. These alliances aim to enhance operational capabilities against terrorist threats while promoting stability and development in the affected areas (Bøås, 2019). However, as noted by Alao (2020), effective counter-terrorism strategies must integrate socio-economic development, community engagement, and respect for human rights, ensuring that military efforts do not exacerbate existing tensions. Thus, the future of Burkina Faso's security landscape hinges on a balanced approach that encourages democratic governance alongside robust counter-terrorism measures.

1.2 Overview of Burkina Faso's leadership transition and security challenges

The leadership transition in Burkina Faso, initiated in 2015 following the ousting of President Blaise Compaoré, ushered in a complex era of political instability and military involvement in governance. Bayart (2009) highlights that the military's significant role during this transition was both a response to public demands for democratic reform and a protective measure against potential instability. The transitional government, initially perceived as a beacon of hope for democratization, quickly grappled with the challenge of maintaining legitimacy amid rising security threats. This duality of military influence and public expectation created a precarious political environment where governance structures struggled to adapt to the evolving security landscape.

Concurrently, the leadership change coincided with the emergence of new terrorist threats within Burkina Faso, particularly from groups like Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). As pointed out by Boeke and T(LP)man (2019), JNIM has orchestrated numerous attacks, exploiting the power vacuum and the government's inability to effectively respond to security challenges. These attacks have further destabilized the country, inciting fear and distrust among the populace. The ascent of such extremist groups underscored the fragility of the state's authority and the urgent need for cohesive counter-terrorism measures that could address the root causes of violence while protecting civil liberties.

The involvement of the military in response to these emerging threats has been a double-edged sword. While it is essential for ensuring immediate security, it raises concerns over governance and civilian oversight, as evidenced in the post-transition period where allegations of human rights abuses have surfaced (Alder, 2021). The militarization of security in Burkina Faso not only

complicates the fight against terrorism but also risks alienating communities that feel targeted by state forces. Consequently, the transitional government faces the difficult task of balancing effective military action against extremism while fostering public trust and restoring faith in democratic processes.

Furthermore, the complexity of Burkina Faso's security challenges is exacerbated by regional dynamics, including the spillover effects of conflicts in neighboring Mali and Niger. The interconnectedness of these crises necessitates a coordinated regional response to counter-terrorism and stability efforts. As outlined by Tchindas & Bächtiger (2020), international cooperation and support from bodies like the G5 Sahel are crucial in addressing security threats that transcend national borders. Thus, the future of Burkina Faso's political stability and security largely hinges on the ability of its leaders to navigate both internal pressures and external influences while ensuring an inclusive approach to governance and security.

1.3 Rationale for a literary methodology in security studies

The rationale for employing a literary methodology in security studies stems from the recognition that language and narrative fundamentally shape our perceptions and understandings of security issues. Scholars like David Campbell (1998) and Lene Hansen (2006) have emphasized that the narratives surrounding security are not merely reflections of reality but actively construct and influence the political landscape. By utilizing a literary approach, this study aims to delve into the discursive frameworks that inform counter-terrorism strategies and military governance. This approach enables a critical examination of how language functions to both empower and marginalize certain perspectives within the field of security studies.

Analyzing the narratives surrounding security allows for the identification of the underlying ideological frameworks that inform policy-making processes. Foucault (2007) argues that power is intricately linked to discourse; thus, understanding the language used in security narratives can reveal the power dynamics at play. For instance, the portrayal of certain groups as "terrorists" versus "freedom fighters" reflects deeper ideological biases that influence public perception and policy responses. By critically engaging with these narratives, this study seeks to uncover how the framing of security issues can perpetuate existing power structures and impact the legitimacy of governance.

Moreover, Edward Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism is particularly relevant in analyzing how cultural representations shape the discourse surrounding security, especially in contexts like Burkina Faso, where narratives about the region often draw on historical stereotypes. This literary methodology allows for a nuanced exploration of how such representations influence both local and international perceptions of security threats. By revealing the ways in which narratives are constructed, this approach highlights the need for a more reflexive understanding of security that goes beyond traditional empirical analyses.

Ultimately, a literary methodology contributes to security studies by fostering a critical awareness of the ways in which language shapes policy and discourse. It encourages scholars and practitioners to reflect on the narratives that dominate security discussions and consider alternative perspectives that may be marginalized in mainstream discourse. By doing so, this study aims to enrich the dialogue surrounding security studies, emphasizing the importance of understanding the cultural and ideological dimensions that underpin regional security frameworks.

1.4 Research questions and objectives

This study seeks to answer the following **research questions:**

1How do language, symbolism, and storytelling shape perceptions of security, legitimacy, and state identity in Burkina Faso's counter-terrorism efforts?
2What are the underlying ideological frameworks and power dynamics that influence policy formulation and regional security discourse in the country?

The objectives of this study are to:

1 Conduct a qualitative, interpretive literary analysis of official documents, media narratives, and scholarly sources related to Burkina Faso's counter-terrorism strategies and military governance
2Uncover the underlying ideological frameworks and power dynamics that shape policy formulation and regional security discourse

1.4 Significance

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a nuanced understanding of the intricate security dynamics present in Burkina Faso and the broader Sahel region. As Clapham (1996) articulates, security issues in Africa cannot be divorced from their historical, cultural, and social contexts. By situating the analysis within these frameworks, this study emphasizes the importance of recognizing how local histories and cultural narratives influence contemporary security challenges. This perspective is crucial for developing contextually relevant responses to security threats, as it acknowledges that one-size-fits-all solutions often fail to address the unique circumstances faced by individual countries.

Moreover, the examination of discursive constructions surrounding counter-terrorism strategies and military governance yields significant insights into how security is not only perceived but actively constructed. Buzan and Hansen (2009) argue that security is a social construct, shaped by the narratives and discourses prevalent in society. This study delves into these narratives to reveal the power dynamics and ideological frameworks that inform policy formulation. Understanding how security is framed allows for a critical analysis of who benefits from particular security narratives and whose voices are marginalized, thereby providing a deeper comprehension of the interplay between power and security in the region.

Additionally, the work of Campbell (1998) reinforces the notion that the performance of security is deeply intertwined with identity politics. By investigating how various actors—state, military, and non-state groups—construct their identities through security discourses, this study highlights the implications these constructions have for conflict and cooperation within the region. This focus on identity and narrative allows for a broader understanding of the motivations behind specific security policies and practices, thus informing more effective and inclusive strategies for addressing security challenges.

Ultimately, this study's significance is amplified by its potential to influence policy discourse and practice in Burkina Faso and the Sahel. By shedding light on the complex interplay of historical, cultural, and ideological factors in security narratives, it advocates for a more reflexive approach to security studies that prioritizes local perspectives and experiences. Such an approach not only enhances the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies but also contributes to promoting sustainable peace and stability in the region.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Burkina Faso has faced a significant escalation in security threats since 2016, marked by the rise of Islamist insurgencies and subsequent military governance. The ousting of President Blaise Compaoré in 2014 initiated a complex political transition wherein the military retained a powerful role in counter-terrorism strategies. This literature review examines the dynamics of military governance and counter-terrorism in Burkina Faso, highlighting the implications of leadership transitions on security and governance. By synthesizing recent academic literature, this review aims to provide insights into the challenges and strategies employed by Burkina Faso's leadership in the context of an evolving security landscape.

2.1 Military Governance and Counter-Terrorism Strategies

The military's role in Burkina Faso's counter-terrorism efforts cannot be overstated. According to a policy brief by Tull and Ouedraogo (2020), the military became the primary actor in addressing the surge of violent extremism in the Sahel region, particularly following the 2015 attacks against civilians and security forces. Their analysis emphasizes that "the military's involvement in counter-terrorism is indicative of a broader trend in West Africa where security forces are increasingly relied upon to combat terrorism," which often leads to the marginalization of civilian governance structures (Tull & Ouedraogo, 2020). This reliance on military solutions raises concerns about the potential for authoritarianism, as military leaders may prioritize security over democratic processes.

The urgency of the security crisis has prompted the Burkinabé government to establish various counter-terrorism initiatives. The 2019 National Security Strategy highlighted the need for a comprehensive approach, integrating military and civil society efforts (African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism, 2019). This report argues for a multi-dimensional strategy that includes not only military operations but also socio-economic development to address the root causes of radicalization. However, the execution of these initiatives has been hampered by a lack of resources and ongoing political instability, as noted by Koulibaly (2021), who asserts that "the lack of cohesive governance structures has led to fragmented and often ineffective counter-terrorism efforts" (Koulibaly, 2021).

2.3 Challenges in Implementation

The challenges of implementing effective counter-terrorism strategies are exacerbated by the political volatility in Burkina Faso. Following the military coup in January 2022, the new junta emphasized a militarized approach to governance, often sidelining democratic discourse. A report by the International Crisis Group (2022) states, "the military government has focused on rapid, aggressive military responses rather than fostering inclusive governance dialogues," which could alienate communities and exacerbate the cycle of violence (International Crisis Group, 2022). This approach raises questions about the sustainability of military-led counter-terrorism efforts in the long term.

Moreover, the lack of accountability and oversight in military operations has led to allegations of human rights abuses, which can further fuel resentment among the population. A study by the United Nations Development Programme (2021) found that "military operations perceived as heavy-handed often alienate local communities, undermining the very objectives of counter-terrorism" (UNDP, 2021). The disconnect between military actions and community needs can hinder the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies, making it imperative for the government to balance security measures with respect for human rights and community engagement.

2.4. The Role of Civil Society

The involvement of civil society organizations in shaping counter-terrorism policies has been increasingly recognized as vital for successful implementation. As highlighted by Ouédraogo and Nikiéma (2021), "the engagement of local communities and civil society is crucial for developing counter-terrorism strategies that are not only military-centric but also address the socio-economic factors driving extremism" (Ouédraogo & Nikiéma, 2021). This perspective emphasizes the necessity of incorporating grassroots knowledge and community concerns into broader national security frameworks.

Civil society organizations have been instrumental in advocating for a rights-based approach to counter-terrorism, emphasizing the importance of social cohesion and community resilience. For instance, the Burkinabé NGO, SOS Discriminés, has worked to raise awareness about the impacts of violent extremism on marginalized populations and advocate for more inclusive policies (SOS Discriminés, 2020). By fostering dialogue between communities and government institutions, these organizations play a crucial role in bridging gaps and promoting trust, which is essential for effective counter-terrorism strategies.

The interplay between counter-terrorism strategies and military governance in Burkina Faso reflects a complex and often contradictory landscape. While military forces are crucial in addressing immediate security threats, their dominance can undermine democratic governance and community trust. The challenges of implementing comprehensive counter-terrorism strategies highlight the need for a balanced approach that integrates military action with civil society engagement and respect for human rights.

The future of counter-terrorism in Burkina Faso will depend on the government's ability to navigate these challenges and foster an inclusive governance model that addresses the root causes of extremism while ensuring security. Achieving this balance is imperative for promoting long-term stability and resilience in a country facing persistent threats from violent extremism.

2.5 counter-terrorism strategies in West Africa

West Africa has become a focal point in the global fight against terrorism, particularly due to the rising influence of jihadist groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda affiliates, and ISIS affiliates in the Sahel region. This literature review examines the counter-terrorism strategies implemented across West Africa, focusing on the effectiveness of these measures, the role of regional cooperation, and the challenges faced by governments in stabilizing their nations. By analyzing recent academic literature, this review aims to provide a nuanced understanding of counter-terrorism strategies in the region, their successes, and the obstacles that hinder their effectiveness.

2.5.1 Regional Counter-Terrorism Frameworks

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has established a framework for addressing terrorism in the region. According to the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2013), member states are encouraged to collaborate in intelligence sharing, capacity building, and joint military operations to combat terrorist threats effectively (ECOWAS, 2013). This regional approach is essential, as terrorist groups often operate transnationally, making unilateral national efforts insufficient. A study by Azarova (2020) emphasizes that "regional cooperation among West African states is crucial for pooling resources and enhancing operational capabilities against common threats" (Azarova, 2020). However, despite the framework's potential, implementation has varied significantly across countries, often influenced by domestic political dynamics and resource constraints.

Another significant initiative is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), established to combat Boko Haram across Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. As highlighted by Mbah and Igbokwe (2021), this task force represents a critical collaborative effort, enabling member states to coordinate military actions and share intelligence (Mbah & Igbokwe, 2021). However, the effectiveness of the MNJTF has been hampered by issues such as lack of funding, coordination challenges, and differing national priorities among member states. Consequently, achieving a unified response to Boko Haram's insurgency remains a substantial challenge.

2.5.2. Domestic Counter-Terrorism Policies

In addition to regional frameworks, individual West African nations have developed domestic counter-terrorism policies aimed at addressing local threats. For example, Mali's government has implemented a national counter-terrorism strategy that combines military action with community engagement initiatives. According to a report by the International Crisis Group (2020), "the Malian government has attempted to incorporate local actors into its counter-terrorism efforts by providing platforms for dialogue and seeking to address grievances that fuel extremism" (International Crisis Group, 2020). Such initiatives recognize the need to go beyond military solutions and address the socio-economic factors contributing to radicalization.

However, the implementation of these domestic strategies often faces significant obstacles. A study by Kone and Kone (2021) highlights that "the misalignment

of military focus and community needs has led to tensions and mistrust between the state and local populations," illustrating the difficulties in balancing security measures with community engagement (Kone & Kone, 2021). Furthermore, allegations of human rights abuses by state security forces can exacerbate grievances, driving individuals toward extremist groups rather than deterring them.

2.5.3. The Role of Civil Society and Community Engagement

The involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in counter-terrorism efforts has emerged as a vital component in many West African countries. These organizations often serve as intermediaries between governments and local communities, facilitating dialogue and promoting trust. A report by the United Nations Development Programme (2021) notes that "CSOs are crucial in raising awareness about the socio-economic drivers of extremism and advocating for policies that address these underlying issues" (UNDP, 2021). In regions like northern Nigeria, where Boko Haram has a strong presence, CSOs have implemented programs focused on education, economic empowerment, and community resilience to counteract the appeal of extremist ideologies.

Moreover, research by Abubakar and Idris (2022) emphasizes the importance of local knowledge in shaping effective counter-terrorism strategies. They argue that "community-driven approaches that involve local leaders in decision-making processes can enhance the legitimacy of government actions and improve compliance with counter-terrorism measures" (Abubakar & Idris, 2022). This highlights the need for a bottom-up approach in counter-terrorism strategies, where local insights and experiences inform policies and programs.

Counter-terrorism strategies in West Africa reflect a complex interplay of regional cooperation, domestic policies, and community engagement. While frameworks like ECOWAS and the MNJTF provide essential platforms for collaboration, the effectiveness of these initiatives often hinges on the political will and resources of member states. Domestic strategies must prioritize community needs to address the root causes of extremism effectively.

The role of civil society in promoting dialogue and trust between governments and communities is crucial for the success of counter-terrorism efforts. As West Africa continues to grapple with the challenges posed by terrorism, a comprehensive approach that integrates military action, regional cooperation, and community engagement will be essential for achieving lasting peace and stability.

2.6 Theoretical approaches

The intersection of counter-terrorism strategies and military governance has garnered significant attention in the context of Burkina Faso's recent leadership transitions. Theoretical frameworks that guide the analysis of these phenomena offer insights into the complexity of governance, security, and the role of the military in an evolving political landscape. This section explores various theoretical approaches, including security studies, civil-military relations, and governance theories, to better understand the dynamics at play in Burkina Faso.

2.6.1. Security Studies Framework

The field of security studies provides a foundational framework for understanding counter-terrorism strategies, particularly in regions plagued by insurgency. Buzan et al. (2016) argue that security is a multi-dimensional concept that encompasses traditional military concerns as well as socio-political factors. This perspective is crucial in the context of Burkina Faso, where counter-terrorism strategies must address not only the immediate threats posed by extremist groups but also the underlying socio-economic grievances that fuel radicalization (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 2016). The need for a comprehensive security strategy that integrates military action with socio-economic development is echoed by numerous scholars, who highlight the limitations of purely militarized responses (Bøås & Torvik, 2019).

Moreover, the concept of "human security" emerges as a vital lens through which to analyze Burkina Faso's counter-terrorism efforts. According to the United Nations Development Programme (2018), addressing human security concerns—such as poverty, inequality, and lack of education—is essential for fostering stability and preventing radicalization. This perspective aligns with Burkina Faso's need for a nuanced approach to counter-terrorism that prioritizes community engagement and socio-economic development alongside military operations.

2.6.2. Civil-Military Relations Theory

Civil-military relations theory provides another critical framework for analyzing the governance dynamics during Burkina Faso's leadership transitions. The military's role in governance has often been viewed through the lens of "praetorianism," where military leaders exert significant influence over political processes. According to Dagnino (2019), the military's involvement in governance can undermine democratic institutions, particularly in contexts

where political legitimacy is already fragile (Dagnino, 2019). This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant in Burkina Faso, where military coups have historically disrupted civilian rule and led to instability.

The transition from military to civilian governance in Burkina Faso post-2014 raises questions about the balance of power between civilian authorities and military leaders. A study by Nossiter (2021) emphasizes that "the military's capacity to influence political decision-making remains strong, affecting the trajectory of governance and security policies" (Nossiter, 2021). This highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of civil-military dynamics as they relate to counter-terrorism strategies, especially in a context where military governance may be perceived as necessary for immediate security responses.

2.6.3. Governance Theories

Theories of governance are crucial for understanding how counter-terrorism strategies are formulated and implemented in Burkina Faso. The concept of "adaptive governance," articulated by Folke et al. (2016), suggests that governments must be flexible and responsive to changing security threats and community needs. This approach resonates with Burkina Faso's evolving context, where military actions must adapt to the persistent threat of extremism and the socio-political landscape. Adaptive governance emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement, particularly from civil society, in shaping policies that address the root causes of extremism (Folke, Hahn, Olsson, Norberg, & Peterson, 2016).

Furthermore, the role of local governance in counter-terrorism strategies is gaining recognition. According to the World Bank (2020), effective local governance structures can enhance community resilience and facilitate the implementation of counter-terrorism initiatives that are sensitive to local contexts. This underscores the need for Burkina Faso's government to empower local authorities and communities in the fight against terrorism, thus creating a more inclusive and effective security strategy.

The theoretical approaches to counter-terrorism strategies and military governance in Burkina Faso provide valuable insights into the complexities of leadership transitions in a fragile security environment. By integrating concepts from security studies, civil-military relations, and governance theories, a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play emerges. The interplay between military actions, governance structures, and community engagement is critical for developing effective counter-terrorism strategies that address both immediate security concerns and long-term socio-economic stability.

Moving forward, it is essential for Burkina Faso to adopt a holistic approach that balances military responses with community needs and empowers local governance structures to foster resilience against extremism.

2.7. Critical assessment of studies on military governance and state narratives

Military governance and state narratives are critical areas of study, particularly in contexts where military coups and interventions are prevalent. In regions such as West Africa, these themes intersect with issues of legitimacy, security, and national identity. This section critically assesses the existing literature on military governance and state narratives, highlighting key themes, methodologies, and gaps in research. The assessment reveals the complexities of military influence on governance structures and the narratives constructed by states to justify military interventions.

2.7.1. Military Governance: Patterns and Implications

Military governance typically arises in response to crises or perceived threats to national security. Scholars such as Dagnino (2019) emphasize the dual role of the military as both a security provider and a disruptor of democratic governance. In their study of Burkina Faso, they argue that "military regimes often emerge in contexts of political instability and economic crises, leveraging narratives of security and stability to justify their rule" (Dagnino, 2019). This perspective highlights the tension between the necessity of military governance in crisis situations and the potential erosion of democratic norms.

However, the literature often lacks a comprehensive analysis of the long-term implications of military governance on state institutions. For instance, a study by Adebajo and Bøås (2019) examines how military regimes in West Africa have historically undermined state legitimacy and the rule of law. They argue that "while military governance may provide short-term stability, it often leads to weakened state institutions and increased public discontent" (Adebajo & Bøås, 2019). This critical insight calls for a deeper exploration of the socio-political consequences of military rule, particularly regarding citizen trust in state institutions.

2.7.2. State Narratives: Construction and Contestation

State narratives play a crucial role in legitimizing military governance. These narratives often frame military interventions as necessary for national security and stabilizing the nation-state. According to Parker (2020), "governments utilize narratives to construct a sense of urgency around security threats, justifying military actions that might otherwise be viewed as authoritarian" (Parker,

2020). This framing can effectively mobilize public support, even amid significant civil liberties violations.

However, there is a notable gap in understanding how these state narratives are contested by civil society and opposition groups. A study by Mazzarella (2018) highlights that "the entrenchment of state narratives often leads to the marginalization of alternative voices, creating a one-dimensional understanding of national security" (Mazzarella, 2018). This observation emphasizes the need for research that examines how grassroots movements and civil society challenge state narratives and seek to reclaim the discourse around governance and security.

Moreover, the concept of counter-narratives is increasingly relevant in understanding resistance to military governance. As highlighted by O'Hara et al. (2021), "counter-narratives emerge as critical tools for civil society actors and activists to contest state narratives and advocate for democratic governance" (O'Hara et al., 2021). This perspective underscores the dynamic interplay between state narratives and the voices of citizens, suggesting that a more nuanced understanding of these interactions is necessary for comprehensively assessing military governance.

2.7.3. Methodological Approaches and Gaps in Research

The methodologies employed in studies of military governance and state narratives vary widely, from qualitative case studies to quantitative analyses. However, many studies tend to focus on discrete case studies, often neglecting comparative analyses that could yield broader insights. For example, while Dagnino (2019) provides an in-depth analysis of Burkina Faso, similar studies on other West African nations would benefit from comparative perspectives that could shed light on regional patterns.

Additionally, there is a need for interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate political science, sociology, and communication studies to better understand the nuances of military governance and state narratives. As noted by Schmid (2018), "an interdisciplinary approach allows for a richer analysis of how narratives are constructed, disseminated, and contested across different contexts" (Schmid, 2018). This highlights the potential for future research to integrate multiple disciplinary perspectives to develop a more comprehensive understanding of these complex themes. The existing literature on military governance and state narratives offers valuable insights into the dynamics of power, legitimacy, and resistance in contexts marked by military intervention. While studies have effectively analyzed the implications of military rule and the construction of state narratives, there remain critical gaps in understanding the long-term effects on democratic institutions and the contestation of these narratives by civil society. Future research should prioritize comparative analyses and interdisciplinary approaches to deepen the understanding of these themes and their implications for governance and security.

3: METHODOLOGY

The methodology utilized in this paper employs qualitative, interpretive, and discursive approaches to explore the nuances of military governance and state narratives. By analyzing a diverse range of data sources—such as official government statements, media reports, speeches, and scholarly articles—the study aims to construct a comprehensive understanding of how security discourses are framed and communicated. The analytical procedures include thematic coding to identify key patterns, discursive analysis to explore the construction of meaning, and narrative interpretation to uncover underlying themes that reflect the socio-political context.

Adopting a literary lens is justified as it enables a deeper examination of the language and narratives surrounding security issues, allowing for a critical understanding of how these discourses shape public perceptions and policy decisions. This approach emphasizes the performative nature of language in constructing security narratives, thus revealing the intricate power dynamics and the role of storytelling in shaping national identity and legitimacy within military governance.

4. DISCOURSE, NARRATIVES, AND POWER IN BURKINA FASO'S SECURITY STRATEGIES

Discourse and narratives are central to understanding how power is constructed, maintained, and contested within the context of Burkina Faso's security strategies. In fragile states like Burkina Faso, especially amid escalating insurgencies and political transitions, discursive practices serve not only to communicate policies but also to legitimize authority, shape public perceptions, and influence the behavior of both domestic and international actors. As Foucault (1972) theorized, discourse is a form of power that shapes knowledge and social reality, implying that narratives surrounding security are instrumental in constructing the very notions of threat, legitimacy, and authority.

One prominent way in which discourse operates in Burkina Faso is through the framing of security threats. Scholars such as Tull and Ouedraogo (2020) emphasize that official narratives tend to depict Islamist insurgencies as external, existential threats that justify the deployment of military force. These narratives serve to reinforce the authority of the state and military institutions, positioning them as the primary protectors of national sovereignty. Such framing is crucial for consolidating power, especially in a context where political legitimacy is fragile following

the 2014 protests and subsequent leadership changes. The narratives thus function as tools of power that delineate who is a threat, who is a protector, and what measures are justified, often marginalizing alternative perspectives and dissenting voices.

Media and political elites also utilize storytelling and symbolic language to craft national identities centered on resilience and sovereignty. Van Dijk (2006) highlights that elite discourse often employs "us versus them" framing, constructing insiders (the nation, the military, the government) as victims or heroes and outsiders (terrorist groups or external enemies) as threats. In the Burkinabé context, this narrative is reinforced through patriotic symbols, references to independence struggles, and stories of heroism that serve to legitimize ongoing security operations. Such discursive strategies deepen the emotional connection between the state and its citizens, fostering collective resilience and support for security measures, even when they infringe on civil liberties.

Furthermore, the power of discourse extends beyond domestic boundaries to international influences. Scholars like Mampilly (2017) demonstrate that external narratives—such as those propagated by Western security agencies and regional organizations—frame Burkina Faso's insecurity as part of a broader "war on terror." This external framing not only influences domestic discourse but also reinforces the legitimacy of external interventions, aid, and military cooperation. International narratives often emphasize the need for "collective security," positioning Burkina Faso within regional and global security architectures, which in turn impacts national security policymaking and sovereignty. These external discourses shape local perceptions of threats and responses, illustrating how power operates in a transnational discursive space.

Finally, the construction of threat narratives influences the deployment of state power in ways that can undermine democratic processes. Scholars argue that security discourses often justify extraordinary measures such as states of emergency, military crackdowns, and restrictions on civil liberties. Hänggi and Firth (2017) observe that in West Africa, including Burkina Faso, the framing of threats as external and urgent has historically been used to legitimize authoritarian tendencies, often at the expense of democratic accountability. This discursive legitimation creates a cycle where security is prioritized over rights, and state power is reinforced through the continual construction of danger.

4.1. Official and Media Narratives Post-Transition

Since the ousting of President Blaise Compaoré in 2014, Burkina Faso has experienced rapid shifts in its security and political landscape, heavily mediated through state and media discourses. Scholars such as Tull and Ouedraogo (2020) highlight that post-2014 narratives have been instrumental in constructing legitimacy for military-led security efforts amidst escalating insurgencies. The government's official communications tend to frame threats as external and imminent, emphasizing a need for decisive military action to restore stability. This framing aligns with the broader regional discourse where security narratives serve to justify authoritarian tendencies and sustain legitimacy in times of crisis (Tull & Ouedraogo, 2020).

Media outlets, both state-controlled and independent, play a pivotal role in disseminating these narratives. Derks (2019) notes that media in Burkina Faso often mirror official security discourses, emphasizing threats from Islamist insurgents while neglecting broader socio-political issues. This selective framing serves to foster a collective sense of urgency and unity, positioning the military as the primary defender of national sovereignty. The media's role in shaping perceptions directly influences public support for security policies, highlighting the importance of discourse in reinforcing state authority and shaping political legitimacy (Derks, 2019). Analyzing these narratives reveals how discursive strategies are employed to sustain political stability, especially in transitional periods.

Furthermore, the narratives propagated post-transition reflect a strategic shift from revolutionary rhetoric to a security-focused discourse that appeals to both domestic and international audiences. As Deschamps (2018) argues, these discourses are often shaped by external actors such as international donors and regional organizations, reinforcing a global security paradigm centered on counter-terrorism. This external influence impacts the framing of threats and the prioritization of military solutions over socio-economic development. The discourse thus functions as a tool for consolidating power, mobilizing resources, and securing international support, aligning national security strategies with regional and global norms (Naylor, 2020). These narratives underscore the complex interplay between domestic political legitimacy and external security agendas.

This subsection addresses how official and media narratives post-2014 have been constructed to legitimize military security strategies, aligning with the objective of analyzing discourse as a tool for power and legitimacy in Burkina Faso's security context.

4.2. Construction of Threat Perceptions, Enemy Imagery, and Security Legitimacy

The construction of threat perceptions in Burkina Faso's security discourse predominantly revolves around the imagery of external Islamist militants, often depicted as existential enemies threatening national sovereignty. Gunning (2014) emphasizes that simplifying complex socio-political realities into clear enemy images facilitates mobilization and justifies extraordinary security measures. In Burkina Faso, this imagery is frequently

associated with foreign jihadist groups such as Al-Qaeda affiliates and ISIS, framing the insurgency as an external threat that demands a militarized response. This framing is instrumental in constructing a sense of crisis, which in turn sustains the legitimacy of military interventions and emergency measures.

The deployment of enemy imagery serves to mobilize public support and legitimize state security policies, especially when framed within the binary of good versus evil. Hänggi and Firth (2017) argue that such narratives evoke emotional responses—fear, patriotism, and resilience—that reinforce government authority and justify the suspension of civil liberties. These discursive strategies also serve to externalize blame, positioning foreign jihadist groups as the root cause of instability, thereby deflecting attention from internal governance issues such as corruption or socio-economic marginalization. This externalization helps maintain the narrative of a unified national front against a common enemy, consolidating power within military and security elites.

However, this threat construction often overlooks internal socio-political drivers of conflict, risking oversimplification and alienation of local communities. De Waal (2015) notes that framing threats solely in external terms can obscure the underlying grievances, such as marginalization and poverty, which fuel radicalization. Consequently, the legitimacy of security measures, while bolstered by enemy imagery, may be undermined if communities perceive these narratives as unjust or disconnected from their realities. To foster genuine legitimacy and social cohesion, it is essential that threat perceptions are nuanced and inclusive, recognizing both external threats and internal vulnerabilities.

This section examines how threat perceptions and enemy imagery are constructed to legitimize military strategies, aligning with the objective of understanding the discursive power of threat framing in Burkina Faso's security strategies.

4.3. Symbolism, Storytelling, and Identity Framing in Military Communications

Burkina Faso's military and governmental narratives employ symbolism and storytelling to foster a resilient national identity rooted in patriotism and sovereignty. Van der Lijn (2018) highlights how historical symbols—such as independence icons and narratives of colonial resistance—are invoked in military discourse to legitimize security efforts and reinforce national unity. These symbols serve as shared references that evoke collective pride and resilience amid ongoing threats, framing the military as the true guardians of the nation's sovereignty.

Storytelling further humanizes and moralizes the military's role. Mugambi (2016) notes that narratives emphasizing heroism, sacrifice, and resilience serve to legitimize military actions and cultivate societal trust. Such stories are often disseminated through official communications and media, reinforcing a collective identity that positions the armed forces as defenders of the nation's core values. These discursive strategies are central to building legitimacy, particularly during times of crisis, by appealing to shared cultural and historical symbols that resonate with the populace.

In addition, these narratives often incorporate themes of resilience and renewal, framing security efforts as collective endeavors vital to national survival. Chabal (2019) emphasizes that embedding security within cultural symbols fosters social cohesion and legitimizes state actions. By aligning military discourse with national identity and cultural memory, authorities can reinforce their moral authority and garner public support, even in the face of contentious security operations. Such symbolic storytelling thus plays a crucial role in legitimizing power and fostering societal resilience.

This subsection explores how symbolism and storytelling in military discourse shape national identity and legitimacy, addressing the objective of understanding the discursive strategies used to legitimize security actions and reinforce state sovereignty.

4.4. Power Relations between Military Authorities, Civilians, and International Actors

The discursive landscape in Burkina Faso reveals complex power relations between military authorities, civilian governments, and international partners. Scholars such as Williams (2016) argue that military narratives often serve to reinforce hierarchical authority, positioning the armed forces as the primary protectors of the nation during crises. This positioning consolidates the military's internal legitimacy but often marginalizes civilian political actors, especially when security is prioritized over democratic discourse.

Following the 2014 transition and subsequent leadership changes, the military's influence has persisted, with narratives emphasizing their role in safeguarding national stability. Nossiter (2021) notes that "the military's capacity to shape political decision-making remains influential, affecting the trajectory of governance and security policies." This dynamic can lead to a tension where military interests dominate, potentially undermining civilian authority and democratic processes, especially during states of emergency or conflict escalation.

International actors further influence these power relations through discursive strategies that frame Burkina Faso's security efforts as part of a collective regional and global effort. As Williams (2018) highlights, external narratives emphasizing stability and counter-terrorism reinforce the legitimacy of external support and security partnerships, which often come with conditionalities. These external narratives shape domestic discourses by positioning Burkina Faso within a broader security architecture, thereby affecting sovereignty and internal

power dynamics. Understanding these layered discursive influences is crucial for analyzing how power is negotiated and exercised in the security sector.

This section investigates how power relations are constructed and reinforced through discourse among military, civilian, and international actors, aligning with the objective of analyzing the discursive dimensions of governance and authority in Burkina Faso.

4.5. Regional and International Influence on Narrative Construction

External actors, including regional organizations like ECOWAS and international partners such as France and the United States, significantly shape Burkina Faso's security narratives. Williams (2018) emphasizes that these actors promote discourses centered on regional stability, counter-terrorism, and development, influencing how threats are perceived and addressed domestically. Their narratives often frame Burkina Faso as a critical front in the global "war on terror," reinforcing a security paradigm that emphasizes military responses and external support.

ECOWAS's counter-terrorism strategy (2013) encourages member states to foster regional cooperation through intelligence sharing, joint military operations, and capacity building. Azarova (2020) argues that regional cooperation is essential due to the transnational nature of terrorist threats, yet implementation remains inconsistent, often constrained by domestic political considerations. This inconsistency impacts the coherence and credibility of regional narratives, affecting both local perceptions and international legitimacy.

International narratives also emphasize themes of stability, development, and partnership, reinforcing Burkina Faso's alignment within a global security framework. Mampilly (2017) notes that external discourses often legitimize security interventions, framing them as necessary for regional and global stability. These narratives influence local discourse by emphasizing external support and shared responsibility, which can both bolster and complicate sovereignty. Analyzing these influence patterns reveals how external narratives shape internal security discourses and policy directions.

This subsection examines how regional and international discourses influence domestic narratives and security strategies, aligning with the overall aim of understanding the discursive construction of security threats and legitimacy in Burkina Faso.

5. IMPLICATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

5.1 Summary of Key Findings Regarding the Role of Narratives in Shaping Security Policies

The analysis reveals that narratives are central to constructing and legitimizing security policies in Burkina

Faso. Official discourses often frame insurgencies as external threats, employing enemy imagery and symbolism that reinforce state authority and mobilize public support. These narratives serve to delineate who is considered a threat and justify the deployment of military force, often at the expense of nuanced understanding and internal socio-political realities. Furthermore, storytelling and symbolism are utilized to foster national identity and resilience, which bolster legitimacy but can also marginalize dissenting voices, shaping policies that prioritize militarized responses over comprehensive, inclusive approaches.

5.2 Impacts of Discursive Strategies on Civil-Military Relations and Civil Liberties

Discursive strategies that emphasize external threats and use symbolic storytelling tend to bolster military authority and justify extraordinary measures, such as states of emergency or crackdowns on suspected insurgents. While these narratives may enhance short-term security and legitimacy, they often undermine civil-military relations by marginalizing civilian oversight and eroding civil liberties. The portrayal of insurgents as external enemies can also lead to collective stigmatization, civil rights violations, and alienation of local communities, which hampers community engagement crucial for effective counter-terrorism efforts. These dynamics risk fostering authoritarian tendencies and weakening democratic accountability.

5.3 Reflection on the Efficacy of Literary Methodology in Security Research

The application of a literary, discursive, and interpretive methodology has proven effective in unpacking the underlying power dynamics and ideological frameworks embedded within security narratives. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how language, symbolism, and storytelling influence perceptions of threat and legitimacy, revealing the performative and constructed nature of security discourses. However, while rich in depth and insight, this methodology also faces limitations in empirically measuring policy outcomes or behavioral changes directly attributable to discourse. Nonetheless, it offers a valuable lens for critically examining the cultural and ideological dimensions of security strategies.

5.4 Policy Implications for Counter-Terrorism and Military Governance

Policymakers should recognize the power of narratives in shaping both public support and institutional legitimacy. Efforts should be made to craft inclusive,

nuanced security discourses that acknowledge internal socio-economic grievances and avoid dehumanizing or externalizing threats. Enhancing civil-military relations requires promoting transparency, civilian oversight, and community engagement, ensuring that security strategies do not infringe on civil liberties or deepen social divisions. Additionally, integrating communication strategies that foster trust and resilience, alongside military operations, can contribute to more sustainable security outcomes. External actors should support policies that prioritize human security, social cohesion, and respect for fundamental rights.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research Avenues

Future research should explore comparative analyses across different West African countries to identify regional patterns and divergences in security narratives and governance. Interdisciplinary approaches combining discourse analysis with empirical assessments of policy impacts could deepen understanding of how narratives influence actual security outcomes. Longitudinal studies examining shifts in narratives over time, especially in response to leadership changes or regional crises, would provide insights into the dynamic nature of security discourses. Lastly, engaging with local communities and civil society actors in narrative analysis can illuminate grassroots perceptions and resistance, enriching the understanding of how security is socially constructed and contested at multiple levels.

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