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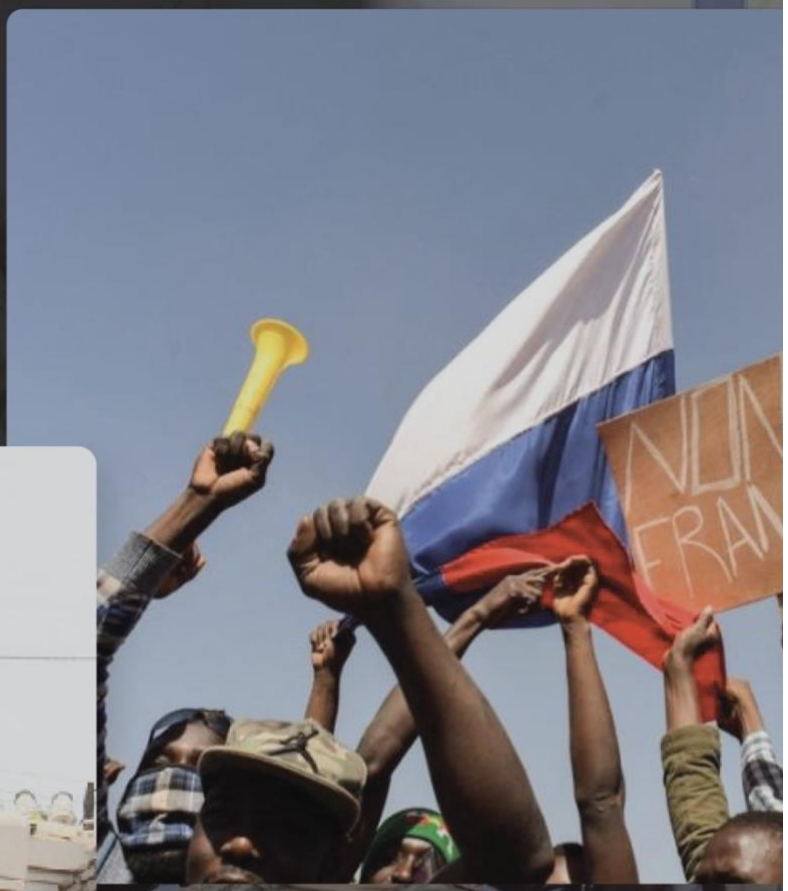
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Military Coups as Pathways to Decolonisation? A Systematic Review of the 2022 Burkina Faso Case in the Sahelian Context

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines whether Burkina Faso's 2022 coup, and the junta's initial declarations and actions, signal decolonisation in the Sahel. Using a systematic literature review (reported with PRISMA as a transparency tool) and an integrated theoretical lens combining decoloniality and dependency theory, the study synthesises scholarship and policy material on regional realignments, political economy, social–cultural reform, and ideology. Findings show clear decolonial intent: formation of the Alliance of Sahel States, exits from ECOWAS and other multilaterals, termination of Western military footprints, resource nationalism, agro-financing, curricular and symbolic reforms, and Sankarist revival. Outcomes remain hybrid: Bretton Woods macro-anchors, capacity constraints, humanitarian stress, and the risk that new partnerships (Russia, Turkey, China) reproduce extractive hierarchies. The coup is therefore indicative of a decolonial turn in direction, not yet in structure. Material decolonisation requires phased AES implementation, macro–structural sequencing, transparent value-addition, civilian-controlled security reform, and inclusive social policy rooted in durable regional solidarity.

Key words: Burkina Faso | Sahel | Decolonisation | Systematic Literature Review | Military coup

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Plagiarism declaration

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY: APPENDIX ONE

I, Tayla Johnson(Student number: 1847338) am a student registered for the degree of BA Masters by coursework in the academic year 2024.

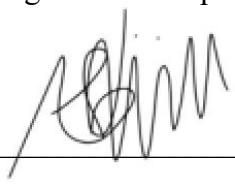
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Across the Sahel, the recent cascade of coups has reopened foundational debates on sovereignty, regional order, and the afterlives of empire. Against this backdrop, Burkina Faso's 2022 military takeover and the early declarations and actions of Captain Ibrahim Traore's junta have been read by some as signalling a decisive decolonial turn, and by others as a reconfigured dependency under new patrons. This paper examines that tension systematically. It asks two research questions: a) can the junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions in Burkina Faso be read through a decolonial framework; and b) is the coup indicative of decolonisation in the Sahel more broadly?

The inquiry is anchored in an integrated theoretical lens that combines decoloniality – which interrogates the coloniality of power, being, and knowledge and the persistence of Euro-Atlantic epistemic authority (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Mignolo 2009; Mbembe 2021; Quijano 2000) – with dependency theory, which illuminates core-periphery hierarchies and the reproduction of external control through trade, finance, and elite mediation (Amin 1972; Ake 1981; Angotti 1981; Blaney 2996). Together, these traditions allow the analysis to distinguish intentions from outcomes, to identify where symbolic delinking is occurring, and to specify the structural preconditions for material decolonisation.

Historically, military institutions in African have functioned as both guarantors of order and sources of regime instability (Amoateng 2022; Wilen 2024). The continent has witnessed recurrent coups since the 1960s, with scholars linking episodes variously to civil-military imbalances rooted in colonial legacies, elite strategies of regime maintenance, and external security alignments (Londregan and Poole 1990; McGowan 2005; Abang 2022; Wilen 2024). Burkina Faso's own trajectory – independence as Upper Volta in 1960; the Sankara revolution and re-naming to Burkina Faso in 1984; the long Compaoré era and the 2014 popular uprising – situates the present moment with a longer arc of contestation over corruption, neo-colonial influence, and people-centred development (Sankara 1985; Wilkins 2989; Williamson 2013; Bertrand 2021; "Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-present), n.d). Recent insecurity and displacement, moreover, have intensified the governance stakes across the Sahel (African Centre for Strategic Studies 2022; Murphy 2016; UNHCR 2024).

At the level of regional order, the post 2022 period has been marked by a reconfiguration of alliances and institutions. Mali, Niger and, Burkina Faso created the Alliance of the Sahel States (AES) through the Liptako-Gourma Charter in September 2023, framing the mutual-defence compact and Pan-African regionalism grounded in self-determination (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Aboagyre 2025; Klomegah 2025; Kulkarni 2025; Ross 2023). Read decolonially, these moves constitute an explicit repudiation of Francafrique; read through dpendency, they raise the practical question of whether AES can mobilise resources, institutional capacity, and policy coordination sufficient to transform sovereignty claims into material outcomes (Amin 1972; Angotti 1981).

A parallel strand is the rejection of Western military footprints and the pursuit of South-South re-alignment. Burkina Faso requested the withdrawal of French forces, echoing steps taken by Mali and Niger, and signalled a broader recalibration of security partnerships (Prashad and

Alexandra 2023; Nzuki 2024; Brown 2024; Rukema 2023). Russia's renewed engagement – arms transfers, private military support, information operations - positions Moscow as an alternative patron amid its post-Ukraine isolation, even as critics warn of transactional, elite-driven exchanges and resource-for-security bargains (Horak et al. 2024; Siegle 2021; Vuksanovic 2023; Gotz and Kaas 2024; Mensah and Aning 2022; Millon 2024; Klyszcz 2024). Turkey and China add further dimensions through defence cooperation, cultural diplomacy, infrastructure, and telecoms finance, expanding policy space while heightening the need to avoid neo-extractivism (Lebovich 2023; "Unravelling Turkish Involvement in the Sahel" 2023; Ramani 2021). These developments invite a careful separation of declaratory rupture from structural change.

The domestic political economy exhibits a similar duality. The government has emphasised public investment infrastructure, energy, agriculture, and social protection; established through domestically financed instruments such as the Patriotic Support Fund; advanced resource nationalism through renegotiation of mining contracts and nationalisation of gold refining; launched agro-financing and local value-chain initiatives; and articulated AES-linked industrial aspirations (Klomegah 2025; "Burkina Faso Economic Update 2024 – Special Chapter Maintaining Reform Momemntum on Social Assistance," n.d; "PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT (PCR) FOR PUBLIC SECTOR OPERATIONS," n.d; "Burkina Faso Economic Outlook | African Development Bank Group," n.d; "Patriotic Support Fund" 2024; Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Cascias 2025; Saidou 2023; AfDB 2024; Aboagyre 2024; "AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP BURKINA FASO INTERIM COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER (I-CSP) 2022-2025," n.d.). These measure align with decolonial calls for value-chain internalisation and endogenous capacity. Yet Burkina Faso remains embedded in Bretton Woods frameworks and regional monetary disciples (WAEMU), committing to a fiscal-deficit target of 3& of GDP by 2027 and relying on IMF/World Bank programmes – an anchoring that dependency theorists identify as reproducing external constraint (AfDB 2024; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007).

The social and cultural domain, long a site of colonial control, has likewise been reworked: the abolition of colonial-era judicial wigs and the re-introduction of indigenous languages and contextualised curricula intervening the coloniality of knowledge, being, and memory (iAfrica 2025; Africa News 2023; BTI 2024; Mignolo 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Mamdani 2021; Mbembe 2021). The promotion of indigenous arts and Pan-African festivals, now mediated through AES-oriented narratives, targets epistemic autonomy (Sithole and Tsholo 2023; Hunter

2024). Yet inclusion remains uneven – particularly for women and youth – amid insecurity and displacement (International Crisis Group 2023; UNHCR 2024). The rising militarisation of civic identity further complicates decolonial gains if self-defence logics and vigilantism erode cohesion (Wilen 2024; Turito 2023; La Marge de Manouvre… 2023).

Finally the ideational repertoire of the regime – sovereignty as an organising principle, Sankarist revival, critique of liberal-domestic templates – recuperates historical agency and authorises institutional experimentation beyond Euro-Atlantic forms (Lebovich 2024; Aliyu 2024; The Conversation 2024, 2025; Sankara 1985; Mbembe 2021; Quijao 2000). Dependency scholarship, however, warns that revolutionary idioms can be co-opted for regime consolidation absent participatory practice (McGowan and Smith 1978; Roger 2024).

Methodologically, the paper conducts a systematic literature review, reported with the PRISMA checklist as a transparency tool and guided by the stated inclusion/exclusion criteria (Moher et al 2009; Higgins, Thomas Chandler et al. 2019). Rather than rehearse causal inventories of coups – a genre often criticised for reducing outcomes to institutional weakness - the review foregrounds consequences: what triumphant military leaders say and do after seizure of power, and how those moves reconfigure (or fail to reconfigure) entrenched relations of domination (Decalo 2973). The contribution is twofold. Substantively, it maps the gap between decolonial intentions and material outcomes across regional realignment, political economy, social-cultural reform, and ideology. Analytically, it shows how decolonial and dependency lenses intersect and diverge: decoloniality clarifies the symbolic and epistemic ruptures, while dependency theory specifies the macro-financial, institutional, and class constraints that condition their realisation.

The remainder of the paper develops this argument in three moves. The literature review situates Burkina Faso and the Sahel within long-run colonial and post-colonial structures (Ake 1981; Amin 1972; Cooper 2002; Siradag 2014; Goody 1982), the theory chapter elaborates the decolonial and dependency frameworks and links peace-building/security architectures to neo-colonial dependency (Crocker 1974; Charbonneau 2014; Umar 2022), and the findings and discussion synthesise the evidence on intentions and outcomes across domains, returning to the two research questions and their implications for assessing whether the post 2022 trajectory constitutes material decolonisation or a hybrid order in transisiton.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines whether the 2022 military coup in Burkina Faso can be read through the framework of decolonisation and whether it is indicative of a broader decolonial shift within the Sahel. The theoretical lens of decoloniality anchors this research to conduct a systematic analysis of the junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions. These actions refer to political, cultural-epistemic, and economic happenings. Here, the initial declarations refer to statements articulating the coup leaders' stated reasons, intentions, and proposed direction for the country's social and political order.

This review of literature also seeks to address a gap. Existing scholarship on African coups emphasises causes: elite failures to resolve economic tensions; weak mobilisation; corruption

and inefficiency. This frames military intervention as a result of political disequilibrium, low institutionalisation, inadequate social culture, or more broadly, political violence. Decalo (1973) cautions that treating these traits as a universal definition of coups templates risks and narrows analysis. Following Decalo's intervention, this review shifts the focus from causes to consequences: what victorious military leaders do with power after seizure, and with what effects the population.

Accordingly, this review situates Burkina Faso within the Sahel's geopolitical landscape and assesses how the 2022 coup aligns with or departs from regional patterns. By analysing the junta's declarations and actions through a decolonial lens, and relating them to historical and regional dynamics this chapter reviews the following: firstly, whether the junta's programme can be read as decolonial and secondly, whether the coup in Burkina Faso signals a wider decolonial trajectory across the Sahel.

2.2 A brief history of Coups, leadership and decolonisation on the continent

This section outlines the historical trajectory of military coups on the African continent as foregrounding literature to understand why coups occur, their consequences, and their reported outcomes.

According to Amoateng (2022), the military has been a central institution in Africa, both in protecting states from external threats and simultaneously posing risks to their internal stability. Historically, military forces have been known to defend states but also destabilised regimes through coups d'état. Amoateng (2022) defines a coup as the coercive seizure of power by the military, or a sect of it, to control state politics.

Between the 1960s and 2012, Africa experienced over two hundred coups (Amoateng 2022). Although many scholars once believed that independence and the spread of democratic practices would reduce their occurrence, recent years have seen a resurgence of coups in the Sahelian belt, including in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Chad, Niger, Sudan and Burkina Faso. The drivers of coups include poor governance, corruption, autocracy, limited growth, weak standards of living and the personal ambitions of military officials (Amoateng 2022).

Importantly, Amoateng (2022) highlights that coups cannot be explained only through internal weaknesses; external influence must also be considered. Neo-colonialism, as defined by Kwame Nkrumah and cited by Amoateng (2022), refers to the granting of formal independence

while maintaining control through economic and political influence. An example of this on the continent is the involvement of the CIA and Britian in the 1966 overthrow of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. Such cases emphasise the need to situate coups within the framework of neo-colonialism and external interference. This positions coups as not only domestic power struggles but also a reflects on Africa's contested post-colonial trajectory.

The Sahel's current wave of coups reinforces this historical pattern. Wilen (2024) defines a coup as an illegal and overt attempt by the military or other elites to remove the sitting executive. He situates their recurrence within the broader legacy of civil-military imbalance which itself is a product of colonial rule. Colonial administrations left African states with oversized, politicised militaries, and weak institutions in education, legislation, and public health (Wilén 2024). Post-independence, these militaries became a central part in state-building, with many liberation leaders rising from their ranks. This legacy entrenched the military's dominance in politics. Abang (2022) similarly conceptualises coups as embedded in African politics, noting their prevalence during the Cold War and their enduring role in shaping leadership traditions.

Wilen (2024) further explains how regime maintenance strategies reinforced military dominance by distributing political and military offices in exchange for loyalty, thereby normalising the military's central role in governance. In addition, militaries became indispensable to regimes through their involvement in counterinsurgency campaigns and international peacekeeping operations. Foreign interventions and extensive security force assistance programmes, such as the European Union's multibillion-euro investments and the United Nations' decade long deployment of over 13,000 troops to Mali under MINUSMA. This is an example of how security force assistance programmes entrench the military as a pivotal actor in Sahelian politics. These dynamics highlight how colonial legacies and external interventions converge to sustain military centrality in both national and regional politics (Wilén 2024).

Historically, coups in Africa began with the 1952 Egyptian coup and Sudan's coup in 1958 (Abang 2022). Between 1956 and 2001, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed 188 coup attempts, with most states struggling to institutionalise democracy and development (McGowan 2005). Abang (2022) notes that in weak democratic contexts, coup leaders often frame their interventions as legitimate correctives to failed governance. More recently, coups have coincided with episodes of democratic regression and uprisings, such as in Egypt (2011), Libya and Burkina Faso

(2014), and Zimbabwe (2019). This perspective positions militaries as defenders of state integrity but also as actors who subordinate civilian authority.

However, Simura (2024) offers a counter perspective, suggesting that the new wave of coups in the Sahel reflects an explicit challenge to entrenched colonial relationships, particularly with France. Rather than being solely symptoms of democratic weakness, these coups may represent efforts to delink from colonial spheres of influence and assert greater autonomy. This perspective foregrounds the central research questions of this study: whether the initial declarations and subsequent actions by the Burkinabe junta can be read through the framework of decolonisation, and whether the coup in Burkina Faso is indicative of a wider decolonial process in the Sahel.

2.2.1 What makes coups so common in West Africa?

Building on the above conceptualisation of coups, this section examines why coups have historically been frequent in West Africa and what this implies for contemporary Sahelian dynamics relevant to the research questions. McGowan (2004) argues that West Africa's position on the periphery of the global economy has created a high risk of coups. In a complementary quantitative analysis, Londregan and Poole (1990) find that low income levels and poverty encourage coups, that coups tend to beget further coups, and that conditions under which coups occur do not always correlate directly with poor economic performance or political instability. They also emphasise a distinction between revolutions, which re-organise society more profoundly, and coups which can retain pre-existing political structures (Londregan and Poole 1990).

Londregan and Poole (1990) further note that governments, whether elected of autocratic, retain levers to influence economic growth. Even corrupt autocrats face incentives to pursue growth, as economic failure can precipitate their removal in subsequent coups. In this sense, the political logic of coup-prone environments can generate short term attempts at performance, without necessarily transforming underlying structures (Londregan and Poole 1990).

McGowan (2004) extends this analysis through three perspectives. First, an international political economy view holds that autocratic leaders prioritise short term gains over long-term development, producing a downward spiral of corrupt politics. Second, a world-system perspective situates West Africa within a single capitalist world economy comprising core, semi-periphery, and periphery. Post-colonial class formation in West Africa left little indigenous class land owners or business class; ownership concentrated in political elites,

heightening coup risk (McGowan 2005). Third, a rational-choice perspective explains coups at a micro-level: leaders act in self-interest, seeking short-term political survival given the high risk of losing office to a coup or civil war. This helps explain why corruption often accompanies periods of instability (McGowan 2005).

Importantly, McGowan (2004) diverges from Londregan and Poole (1990) by suggesting that socio-economic decline is a consequence of political instability, rather than a primary cause. By contrast, Londregan and Poole (1990) observe only limited direct correlation between coups, negative economic growth, and political instability, implying that coups can sometimes be framed as corrective or performance inducing – though this remains a precarious space for leaders facing popular expectations for rapid change.

Taken together, these perspectives clarify why coups have clustered in West Africa: structural dependence and historically rooted elite concentration, coupled with short-term survival logics, create fertile ground for recurrent military interventions. This background provides a lens for the present study's research questions by helping assess whether the Burkinabe junta's declarations and actions signify a decolonial break with peripheral dependency – or instead reflect rational-choice survival within the existing order – and whether the Burkina Faso coup signals a boarder decolonial trajectory across the Sahel.

2.2.2 The revolutionary Ghanaian coup of 1981: a progressive change in government and development

Building on the debate above about whether coups worsen or improve socio-economic conditions, this case considered the 1981 Ghanaian coup that brought Jerry John Rawlings to power as an instance where a coup catalysed reform. Rawlings ousted General Fred Akuffo in 1981, arguing that the prior government has failed to improve Ghanaian society (Adedeji 2001). His regime adopted a "bottom-up" strategy to involve citizens in nation-building and politics, and pursued a dual transition that combined economic and political change to achieve revolutionary outcomes (Adebajo 2024)(Adedeji 2001).Notably, authoritarian rule, liberalisation and democracy intersected: regular democratic processes and elections continued under his leadership. Early on, between 1981 and 1983, western governments reacted with hostility, in part due to Ghana's links to Cuba and Libya and Rawling's anti-imperialist rhetoric (Adedeji 2001).

Despite acknowledged difficulties in managing the Economic Reform Programme and the uneven effects of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and IMF aid conditionalities,

Rawlings redirected production and resources towards rural areas, yielding substantial development and economic growth (Adedeji 2001). In this sense the coup initiated a trajectory from military takeover to democratic development and measurable socio-economic improvement (Adedeji 2001).

For this study, the Ghana case illustrates how a coup can, in specific conditions, enable bottom-up participation, sustain electoral processes, and reorient economic priorities. These are features which resonate with debates about decolonisation and autonomy from external influence. These elements help frame the analysis that follows: whether the Burkinabe junta's declarations and actions similarly align with a decolonisation framework, and whether the Burkina Faso coup signals a broader decolonial shift across the Sahel.

2.2.3 Political history of Burkina Faso and Thomas Sankara.

Upper Volta formally gained independence from colonial rule in 1960 from France. Its first president was Maurice Yameogo. Its constitution was adopted in 1960 a year later, a military assistance agreement was signed with France. State recognition and diplomatic relations with the United States began in 1960 with the newly independent state of Upper volta. ("Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," n.d.). Thomas Sankara took control of the Upper Volta government in August 1983. In 1984, Sankara formally renamed the state to Burkina Faso. Burkina Faso means "the land of the Incorruptible people" to reflect Sankara's values of honesty, integrity and the strong character of people. His government drew regional backing, including from Libya's Muammar Qaddafi and inaugurated a period of "revolution" under the National Revolutionary Council. (Sankara 1985) In his 1983 speech "Political Orientation", Sankara called for building a new, free, independent, and prosperous society – one that liberated from social injustice, domination, and the exploitative legacies of imperialism (Sankara 1985). He framed the August revolution as a victory over imperialism and its domestic allies, arguing that the neo-colonial order had reproduced colonial dynamics through corruption, nepotism, and large-scale theft of public funds (Sankara 1985).

Mostly importantly, Sankara committed detach from the "umbilical cord" of imperialism by transforming mentality and practice: empowering workers and the peasantry, reforming the army, advancing women's political participation, and pursuing economic transformation as core fronts of struggle (Sankara 1985). This articulation grounded sovereignty in popular mobilisation and institutional change rather than elite continuity (Sankara 1985).

Willamson (2013) interprets Sankara's military revolution as a political movement advancing alternative approaches to development. The Revolutionary Military Organisation (RMO), formed by Sankara has been described by some scholars as the most radical move toward decolonisation in Burkina Faso's post-independence history (Williamson 2013). Between 1983 and 1987, the military leadership declared a revolution aimed at transforming the country by delivering public services and shared power with citizens. According to Wilkens (1989), Sankara cultivated legitimacy as a "man of the people: confronting corruption (including within government), maintaining an austere personal lifestyle, advocating for women's rights, and challenging entrenched imperial policies. Given six regime changes since independence, the revolution required mass unity to counter factionalism (Wilkins 1989).

As president, Sankara recognised the influence of external powers such as France but placed strategic emphasis on the strath of the national army and civil society. The revolutions legacies, particularly using state institutions to address pressing issues by empowering the proletariat, are noted here as decolonising moves with continued relevance for Burkina Faso's current geo-political landscape (Williamson 2013). Institutional innovations also targeted political transparency and accountability: the Commission of People for the Prevention of Corruption and the Popular Revolutionary Tribunals; regular cabinet reshuffles; and the deployment of civil servants to rural communities to connect policy to lived experience. Through popular tribunals and unifying national ceremonies, citizens were integrated into political processes (Williamson 2013).

Taken together, this political history provides a benchmarks for the present study's research questions. Sankara's declarations and actions articulated a distinctly decolonial project, naming imperialism, restructuring institutions, and mobilising popular participation. This legacy equips the analysis that follows to assess whether the current Burkinabe junta's declarations and subsequent actions can be read through a similar decolonisation framework, and whether Burkina Faso's coup indicates a wider decolonial turn across the Sahel.

2.2.4 Leadership under President Blaise Compaoré

Following the revolutionary period associated with Sankara, Blaise Compaoré was elected president without opposition in December 1991 and remained in power until October 2014, when nationwide protests forced his resignation ("Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," n.d.). His Tenure drew sustained criticism from opposition parties regarding electoral transparency, and boycotts followed his re-elections. Contention intensified after the 2000

constitutional amendment extending the presidential term limit from two to five terms ("Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," n.d.). From April 2011, civil society protests broadened, with political parties demanding Compaoré's resignation; teachers and students joined strikes, and several protesters were killed or arrested. Rising food prices, the death of student of student Justin Zongo, and recurrent violence culminated in Compaoré's 2014 resignation ("Upper Volta/Burkina Faso (1960-Present)," n.d.)

The 2014 uprising and subsequent transition produced notable positive outcomes. Bertrand (2021) identifies it as a powerful episode of mobilisation that facilitated a political transition to President Roch Kabore. Negotiations for the transitional government included civil society, opposition parties, security forces, religious and traditional leaders, and elements of former ruling elites, enabling an inclusive, civilian-led transition and the passage of defining legislation on corruption and judicial independence (Bertrand 2021). Civic movements such as Balai Citoyen, which pressed for sustainable reforms and decolonisation, echoed themes associated with Sankara's 1980s project (Bertrand 2021).

For this study, Compaoré's long incumbency and the 2014 mobilisation provide a crucial bridge between the historical legacies of revolutionary governance and contemporary political recalibration. The inclusive transition and anti-corruption agenda supply reference points for evaluating whether subsequent juntas' declarations and actions can be read through a decolonisation framework – centred on popular participation, institutional accountability, and autonomy from entrenched power – and whether Burkina Faso's coup dynamic contribute to a broader decolonial pattern across the Sahel.

2.2.5 Captain Ibrahim Traore takes leadership in Burkina Faso

Following the preceding developments, Burkina Faso experienced two coups in 2022 within nine months, generating acute political instability amid escalating security threats (African Centre for Strategic Studies 2022). In January 2022, a military leader seized power, claiming he would address the security crisis. In September 2022, he was ousted by the head of the armed forces, Captain Ibrahim Traore, who likewise justified his takeover by citing the deteriorating security situation (African Centre for Strategic Studies 2022). Traore dismissed the transitional government and legislature, suspended the constitution, and instructed senior ministers to ensure administrative continuity. He then appointed himself transitional president and. Through the transitional governing charter, retained authority alongside his military counterparts. Under this charter, revisions require both Traore's assent and a two-thirds

majority in the transitional legislature. Given the weak constitutional framework, limited direction from the junta, and extensive military oversight, the assessment anticipates continued political and security instability (African Centre for Strategic Studies 2022).

A civil society lens is essential for evaluating these developments. Lived experience provides a measure of whether politics serves the population. As of a 2017 study, Burkina Faso's average economic growth since 1960 stood at 5.92%. With a population exceeding 17 million, over half in rural areas, the economy remains structurally vulnerable due to its export-based, extractive character and low industrialisation, conditions largely unchanged since independence (*Burkina Faso Overview- Development News, Research, Data | World Bank*, n.d.). On human development, the United Nations ranked Burkina Faso 183rd of 187 countries, with approximately 46% of the population living below the poverty line. These indicators underscore the urgent need for political reform and improved access to basic services, and they illustrate the adverse effects of Burkina Faso's geopolitical position on social and economic development. They also supply a baseline against which to assess the current transitional junta's promise of development independent from previous imperial powers.

For this study, the juxtaposition of centralised military authority (suspension of the constitution, charter-based entrenchment) with the rhetoric of autonomous development frames the core inquiry. It enables an evaluation of whether the junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions can indeed be read through a decolonisation framework and whether the 2022 coup sequence in Burkina Faso points to a broader decolonial trajectory across the Sahel.

2.2.6 Legacies of colonialism and the need for decolonisation on the African continent

Because the contemporary world order is organised around capitalism, this section examines how capitalism, embedded through colonial rule, continues to entrap African states in exploitative relations that constrain economic independence and development. This theoretical background helps clarify the dependence between former colonies and colonisers and frames the analysis that follows: whether the Burkinabe junta's declarations and actions constitute a decolonial rupture, and whether the Burkina Faso coup signals a wider decolonial shift across the Sahel.

Ake (1981) characterises capitalism as extractive and exploitative. In his account, constant capital (inputs such as raw materials, machinery, transport) and variable capital (human labour) combine in production, but surplus value derives solely from labour. The greater the

exploitation of workers, the higher the surplus Put simply, the relation between owner and worker reproduces inequality across income, social status, political power, access to jobs, an even the capacity for leisure (Ake 1981). For Ake (1981), capitalism and colonialism are intrinsically linked: in pursuit of profit maximisation, European capitalists turned outward, compelling foreign lands to integrate into European economies. Colonialism became the primary mechanism for inserting capitalism into African countries, with lasting effects on political economy. Amin (1972) similarly depicts Africa as a reservoir of labour tied to mineral wealth, where Africans were compelled into the proletariat of European mines and farms. Distorting social systems and eroding autonomy.

Ake (1981) defines imperialism as "the economic control and exploitation of foreign lands arising from the necessity for counteracting the impediments to the accumulation of capital engendered by the internal contradictions of the domestic capitalist economy" (Ake 1981, 20). In Marxist terms, imperialism is a necessary outcome of capitalism: because surplus value (the value of output minus wages) drives accumulation, expansion becomes inherent. Colonialism thus advanced through foreign trade and labour: cheap raw materials and expanded markets generated surplus that fed industrialisation in Europe (Ake 1981). This framework is pertinent in Burkina Faso's historical trade relationships and their contemporary echoes, developed further elsewhere in this review.

Mechanically, colonial penetration transformed African economies via monetisation, trade policy, and foreign direct investment (FDI) (Ake 1981; Amin 1972). Monetisation dissolved pre-colonial currencies in favour of European ones; taxes became payable only in European currency, pushing Africans into colonial labour markets. Trade policy undermined local crafts and reoriented production toward primary commodities suited to colonial needs, embedding dependence. Amin (1972) terms this as the "Africa of the colonial trade" where a) African traders were subordinated within dominant monopolies; b) peasants were taxed in money to compel market production; c) poverty was preserved in some areas to supply cheap labour while skilled workers migrated to colonial "cities"; and d) coercion was used when other mechanisms were unsuccessful. Under these conditions, traditional society lost autonomy and was reorganised to serve external markets. As Amin (1972) concludes, "we must conclude that there are no traditional societies in modern Africa, only accelerating production without raising incomes, concentrating infrastructure only in sectors useful to colonial extraction." (Amin 1972, 524) – legacies still visible in skewed sectoral development.

Cooper (2002) synthesises these dynamics in the notion of the "gatekeeper state". Post-independence, states inherited bureaucracies and militaries that operated between domestic needs and external interests, limiting sovereignty. Dependent on external revenue and marked by corruption, gatekeeper states maintained control by managing borders and allocating external resources; external alliances and resource flows took precedence over internal cohesion and popular trust. Reliance on aid struggles to build national unity beyond elite networks, often linked to raw-material exports, left such states in an embedded crisis, reinforcing neo-colonial ties and narrowing leaders' room to exit extractive monetary and security arrangements (Cooper 2014) (Cooper 2002).

Within Francophone Africa, Siradag (2014), traces how French policy deepened these structures. From the colonial period onward, France pursued a realist foreign policy, building economic ties and a cultural–political assimilation agenda that suppressed local languages and identities while compelling colonies to trade primarily with France at unequal prices. French military power was central both during and after empire: in the post–Cold War era, Paris maintained influence through "cooperation agreements," "military interventions," and "financial assistance policies." The Franc zone's monetary system fixed the CFA franc's exchange rate to the euro; a 50% devaluation in 1994 produced significant instability in West and Central African states (Siradag 2014). Through organisations such as the International Organisation of La Francophonie, France intensified political, economic, and historical ties; between 1963 and 2013, it intervened militarily 31 times, undermining autonomy and, at times, democratic processes while entrenching authoritarian regimes (Sıradağ 2014).

Burkina Faso's 1961 defence pact with France exemplified these dependencies: France stationed officers to instruct and supervise the Burkinabè army, supplied "free" military equipment, and channelled Burkinabè training through French institutions. In return, Burkina Faso was expected to rely on France as its chief arms provider; colonial-era trade constraints further tied raw-material exports to France and restricted third-party trade (Sanin 2023; Siradag 2014). Beyond security and economics, cultural influence persisted through language (French alongside Moore, Fula, Bissa) and political entanglements, including support for allied leaders and roles in regional crises (Sıradağ 2014).

In the 1990s, France adopted the La Baule doctrine, pledging support for liberal, multi-party democracy and human rights; yet it continued backing authoritarian regimes, including in Burkina Faso under President Blaise Compaoré. Its role was contested elsewhere as well, such

as in Rwanda in 1994. France also tightened immigration policies toward Francophone states while using aid, the World Bank, and the European Union to project economic influence (Sıradağ 2014). Militarily, France shifted toward multilateralism through NATO, the AU, the EU, and the UN, thereby legitimising its presence via international missions; between 2010 and 2012 it pledged €300 million to bolster security in Francophone Africa. In 2013, a new white paper on national security and defence aimed to retain French military bases, particularly in theatres of special operations such as Mali's AFRISMA intervention (Sıradağ 2014).

Taken together, these literature depict how colonial and neo-colonial mechanisms: capitalist extraction, monetary and trade regimes, security pacts, and cultural-political assimilation – produced durable dependent and "gatekeeping" governance. This context sharpens the present study's inquiry: do the Burkinabe junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions materially break from these structures (a decolonial reading), and does Burkina Faso's coup form part of a boarder Sahelian move to delink from such external hierarchies?

2.3 Burkina Faso's historical geopolitical relationships

2.3.1 France's relationship with Burkina Faso

To contextualise Burkina Faso's internal security dynamics, this section outlines French foreign and security policy towards African and its bearing on Burkina Faso. As noted earlier, France has maintained deep economic, political, and historical ties with African since the nineteenth century. Within the European and global architecture, France is an EU founding member, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and a member of NATO, the G8, and the G20. It is also a major military spender allocating $62.5 billion to defence in 2011 alone (International Crisis Group 2013)

The International Crisis Group characterises Burkina Faso as a "small country, major power" in regional mediation. In section C of its 2013 report, it labels Burkina Faso as the "West's best friend", emphasising the country's dependence on foreign aid. In 2013, over 80 percent of public expenditure was covered by international development funds, and approximately 16,000 national and foreign NGOs worked in the country. The ten largest institutions contributed about $120 million annually (International Crisis Group 2013). Under Blaise Compaoré, France and the United States were the principal supporting powers. According to the report, these ties promoted Burkina Faso's image and its role in regional crisis management. French-Burkinabe relations were largely problem free, while the relationship with the United States was complicated by links to Charles Taylor and Muammar Qaddafi. Shared security cooperation,

such as surveillance operations in the Sahara, coincided with a reduction in external criticism, pressure, and sanctions regarding Burkina Faso's involvement in regional conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire (International Crisis Group 2013).The report cautions that this lack of scrutiny limited frank assessment of Burkina Faso's internal structural challenges (International Crisis Group 2013).

This portrayal of Western support is challenged by Simura (2024), who argues that the recent wave of coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso signals a turn toward new politics in the region. Simura (2024) critiques France for cultivating a post-colonial clientelist relationship that privileged French economic and political leadership in the Sahel and judged partners on their willingness to comply with Paris' demands (Simura 2024). As an illustration of durability in such alignments, the text refers to the long-standing French relationship with President Paul Biya (Simura 2024).

Simura (2024) further notes convergent policy shifts under coups governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger: moving away from French military intervention and toward a new security alignment through the Liptako-Gourma Charter, which includes Russia and frames revised security and economic cooperation. The agenda also encompasses currency sovereignty, debating the CFA franc's dominance, and linguistic reform, with constitutions revising the status of French from a national language to a "working language" (Simura 2024). Read together, these measures seek to undo post-colonial dominance by re-casting external partnerships and symbols of sovereignty.

Since 2011, NATO's role has gained salience in the Sahel, unfolding alongside the collapse of the Libyan regime (Berger 2021). Berger (2021) describes a "security traffic jam" with multiple national, regional, and international actors investing in stabilisation and development. Violent extremist organisations have expanded by exploiting institutional weaknesses, embedding themselves in local communities and strengthening their ideological influence (Berger 2021). Sahelian states, including Burkina Faso, remain heavily dependent on foreign aid and financial assistance to sustain their economies.

Taken together, this literature presents two intersecting trajectories. One highlights long-standing western partnerships that facilitated Burkina Faso's regional role but muted scrutiny of domestic governance. The other emphasises a post-coup pivot toward alternative security and economic arrangements – currency, language, and alliances – that claim to reassert sovereignty. This duality frames the core inquiry of this study: whether the Burkinabe junta's

initial declarations and subsequent actions can be read through a decolonial framework, and whether Burkina Faso's coup aligns with a broader Sahelian move to delink from entrenched external hierarchies.

2.3.2 The Sahel and Russia's new sphere of influence in West Africa and Burkina Faso

Russia's renewed presence in Africa has coincided with the spread of coups across the Sahel, unsettling relationships between Sahelian states and their former colonial partners. This shift matters for this study because it frames how decolonisation is being articulated in Burkina Faso and the wider Sahel, particularly as ties with France and the United States have diminished under new military leadership in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso (Millon 2024).

Historically, Russia's engagement began at the 1955 Bandung Conference when it was still the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the relationship centred on promoting communist ideology. After the Soviet collapse in 1991, Russia's interests were recast around shared anti-colonial commitments, modernisation, and nation-building, alongside access to African resources and markets (Kohnert 2022). The relationship also developed in academia: since the 1950s Russia has hosted large numbers of African students in Europe, and it has advance a policy of non-interference in states' internal affairs (Kohnert 2022).

Current debates focus on why and how Russia has re-engaged. Horak et al. (2024) argue that Russia employs six instruments of influence and political warfare: 1) political – targeted diplomacy to support proxies, oligarchs, and warlords; 2) military – military-economic diplomacy to circumvent sanctions, export military technologies, and use provate military companies; 3) cognitive – information strategies rooted in earlier KGB practices; 4) economic – energy diplomacy and natural resource leverage; 5) social – support during periods of social unrest, engagement with religious organisations and NGOs, and cultural projection; and 6) information/technical – cyber operations, disinformation, and propaganda (Horak et al. 2024). However, building Russian-lined infrastructure can also generate economic dependence in a new form (Horak et al. 2024).

According to Horak et al. (2024) and Siegel (2021), two aims underpin Russia's renewed interest, especially in the Sahel. First, to shift Sahelian policies in favour of the Russian Federation. Second, to use that influence to alter Western policies toward the Sahel, principally through political warfare (Horak et al. 2024; Siegel 2021).

The Russia-Ukraine war (since February 2022) intensified Russia's isolation among Western powers, prompting efforts to rekindle ties with African states to secure resource interests and sustain global relevance (Mensah and Aning 2022; Klyszcz 2024). As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia can benefit from alignment with Africa's rotating non-permanent member seats in ways that affect sanction dynamics. In January 2022, for example, Russia defended Mali and blocked new sanctions on the military leadership, affirming: " We have always been guided by the principle of African solutions for African problems" (Mensah and Aning 2022).

These developments remain contested. Siegel (2021) contends that Russia is displacing Western influence while promoting alternatives to democracy, not through conventional statecraft (trade, investment, security, assistance) but via mercenaries, arms-for-resources deals, election interference, and disinformation. Mensah and Aning (2022) consider this assessment one-sided and reflective of global power asymmetries.

For this study, the Sahel's reorientation toward Russia provides a critical lens on the two research questions. It enables an assessment of whether the Burkinabe junta's declarations and actions amount to a decolonial break from former dependencies, or whether they represent a strategic substitution of patrons, and whether Burkina Faso's coup is part of a broader Sahelian trajectory toward decolonisation.

2.3.3 Russia as a driving force behind anti-French sentiments in West Africa

Russia's renewed engagement in the Sahel presents two intertwined dynamics relevant to Burkina Faso: 1) a communication and influence strategy that amplifies anti-French sentiment while positioning Russia as an alternative partner, and 2) a parallel development-security narrative that portrays Russian involvement as a remedy to colonial legacies (Mensah and Aning 2022; Horak et al 2024))

Drawing on instrument two (military-economic diplomacy) and instrument five (social influence) identified by Horak et al. (2024), Russia promotes its actions in Africa while discrediting Western actors, particularly France. Through social media and Russian-led outlets, it underscores the value of its presence and exposes perceived Western weaknesses. Mensah and Aning (2022) note examples from Niger and Mali in which Russian outlets framed counterterrorism operations as a façade for uranium extraction and argued that French counterterrorism policies catalysed jihadist activity.

Material support reinforces these narratives. Russia has become a major arms supplier to African states, with its products viewed as relatively inexpensive and straightforward to operate (Mensah and Aning 2022). In 2020, Rosoboronexport signed contracts worth $1.5 billion with ten African countries, followed by another $1.7 billion in additional contracts, including agreements with Burkina Faso. Although presented as free of political conditionalities, Mensah and Aning (2022) contend that such deals enhance Moscow's leverage over energy and natural resource markets, and that Russia's interest in conflict zones facilitates this arms-and-trade strategy in West Africa.

Alongside this, Horak et al. (2024) describe a positive framing of Russian engagement in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. This is particularly visible in Bamako being framed as "logical and strategic", with stated aims to eliminate the consequences of colonialism, restore national economies, and advance security agendas. These claims supply a development-orientated rationale for the Sahel's pivot toward Moscow.

Taken together, these strands yield two competing readings for this study, On one hand, information operations and arms transfers may be read as substituting one external patron for another. On the other, Russia's stated aims, undoing colonial legacies, economic restoration, and security support, offer criteria against which to evaluate decolonial intent. This consolidated view therefore sharpens the core inquiry: whether the Burkinabe junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions can be read through a decolonisation framework, and whether Burkina Faso's coup forms part of a border Sahelian decolonial trajectory.

2.4 Conclusion

This literature review set out to evaluate whether the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso can be read through a decolonisation framework and whether it forms part of a broader Sahelian trend. Drawing on decolonial theory, the chapter shifted analytical emphasis from the causes of coups to their consequences, operationalised as the junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions across political, cultural-epistemic, and economic domains.

Historically, the review traced how coups in West Africa emerge at the intersection of structural dependence and leader-survival incentives. McGowan (2005) highlights the region's peripheral position in the world economy and the reinforcing effects of elite concentration and short-term governance, while Londregan and Poole (1990) underscore poverty, low income, and coup contagion, noting that coups do not always correlate directly with negative growth or instability. The case of Ghana in 1981, demonstrated how a military takeover can, under

specific conditions, catalyse bottom-up participation, preserve electoral processes, and reorient economic priorities. This offers a template for assessing whether military rule can deliver decolonial and developmental dividends (Adedeji 2001).

Within Burkina Faso, the review positioned Sankara's project as an explicit decolonial benchmark – naming imperialism, restructuring institutions, and mobilising popular participation (Sankara 1985; Williamson 2013; Wilkins 1989). The long incumbency of Compaoré and the 2014 mobilisation then illustrated a pivot toward inclusive transition and anti-corruption legislation, supplying additional reference points for institutional accountability and civic agency (Bertrand 2021). The 2022 twin coups and Traore's subsequent centralisation sharpen the core question: whether the junta's promised autonomy translates into reforms that materially reduce dependency and expand citizen-centred governance amid persistent security pressures and adverse socio-economic baselines (Burkina Faso Overview-Development News, Research, Data | World Bank, n.d.).

The review also mapped the colonial and neo-colonial mechanics underpinning enduing dependence: capitalist extraction, labour-reserve economies and "African of the colonial trade", and the gatekeeper state (Ake 1981; Amin 1972; Cooper 2002). It detailed France's historical and contemporary instruments – assimilationist policy legacies, monetary and defence arrangements, aid and intervention practices – that both enables Burkina Faso's regional role and muted scrutiny of domestic governance (Sıradağ 2014; International crisis group 2013; Sanin 2013b). Against this backdrop, the post-coup reconfiguration toward Russia was shown to operate through information operations and arms/economic leverage, while advancing a counter-narrative that frames engagement as undoing colonial legacies and restoring security and economic capacity (Horak et al. 2024; Mensah and Aning 2022; Siegel 2021). The consolidated view presents two competing readings: decolonial rupture versus substitution of patrons.

From this synthesis, the chapter derives evaluation criteria for the analysis that follows: a decolonial reading of the Burkinabe junta would require evidence of: 1) material delinking – from entrenched monetary, trade, and security dependencies (not merely realignment); 2) institutional reform – expands accountability and popular participation which can be built off of examples such as Sankara; 3) Socio-economic reorientation – addresses rural majorities and basic services which measurable improvements relative to inherited baselines; and 4) cultural-

epistemic shifts – foregrounding local languages, knowledge, and autonomy without reproducing external tutelage.

The subsequent analysis applies these criteria to the junta's initial declarations and actions, assessing whether Burkina Faso's 2022 coup is plausibly indicative of decolonisation in the Sahel or better understood as a strategic redistribution of external dependencies.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework: Decolonisation and Dependency Theory

3.1 Introduction

This chapter develops a dual-lens theoretical framework – decoloniality and dependency – to interpret politics, development, and security in the Sahel with Burkina Faso in focus. It provides a conceptual ground for evaluating whether the Burkinabe junta's initial declarations and subsequent actions can be read as decolonisation, and whether the 2022 coup signals a broader Sahelian decolonial trajectory.

The decolonial lens centres indigenous agency, cultural-epistemic autonomy, and the long arc of resistance in West Africa, from village-based mobilisation and political party formation to contemporary cultural initiatives (e.g. theatre federations an regional solidarities) that imagine futures beyond imposed hierarchies (Goldberg 1986; Goody 1982; Greiner, van Wolputte, and Bollig 2022). The dependency lens foregrounds structural subordination within the global economy – elite brokerage, colonial education pipelines, bilateralism, monetary tutelage, and regionally fragmented architectures that shape today's outcomes (Angotti 1981; Randolf 1980; Blaney 1996; Veigi 2016; Aniuwo 1999; Sylla 2020).

Read independently, the two traditions illuminate different problems: decoloniality asks whose knowledge, language, and authority define development and security; dependency asks how institutions, currencies, and alliances reproduce hierarchy. Read together, they specify where sovereignty claims are materially tested: in education (elite formation and epistemic control), currency (CFA-linked monetary dependence and blocked regionalism), and security/peace-building (missions, aid, and doctrines that route budgets and authority through external pipelines).

Accordingly, the chapter proceeds in four moves: 1) decolonisation in the Sahel which unpacks indigenous agency and cultural politics, showing how resistance and community mobilise underwrite political life (Goldberg 1986; Goody 1982; Greiner et al. 2022). 2) dependency theory which defines dependency as problematic and its outlines the critiques; tracing colonial legacies in education and regional/bilateral arrangements (Angotti 1981; Blaney 1996; Randolf 1980; Viegi 2016; Aniuwo 1999). 3) education and currency shows how elite pipelines and monetary design (CFA Franc) convert cultural hegemony into material subordination and addresses how attempted regional integration has been curtailed (Viegi 2016; Sylla 2022; Aniuwo 1999b). 4) peacebuilding and security link intervention architectures to neo-colonial dependency, situating EU/UN/French/ US initiatives and regional forces within inherited military institutions and imperial afterlives (Umar 2022; Murphy 2016; Lara and Delsol 2020; Crocker 1974; Charbonneau 2014).

Across these sections the chapter keeps decoloniality and dependency theory analytically distinct while tracing their intersections. The aim is to generate clear evaluative touchstones for the empirical chapters that follow which seek to answer whether Burkina Faso's post-coup alignments delink from hierarchical circuits of value and authority, redistribute power toward

communities (rather than gatekeeping elites), and improve protection and welfare without deepening external reliance.

3.2 Theoretical Framework: Decolonial Theory and Neo-colonialism

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015), explains decoloniality as the necessary liberatory language for Africa's future, a deepening of decolonisation in spaces marked by the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment. Drawing on Ali Mazuri, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) identifies six long-run consequences of colonial incorporation that remain constitutive of the present. First, colonialism and capitalism forcibly integrated Africa into the world economy through the slave trade: African labour underwrote the rise of a Euro-North American-centred system while relations with Africa remained extractive and oppressive. Second, Africa entered the international system belatedly and subordinately: excluded from the post-1648 Westphalian order. It was admitted into the 1945 UN state system at the lowest rungs of a Euro-North American hierarchy, placing African politics on the back foot within a global order they had materially helped to build. Third and fourth, incorporation normalised cultural and judicial domination, privileging Euro-American languages and world culture while elevating Western international law over customary and traditional jurisprudence. Fifth, Africa was thrust into the information age without prior industrialisation, limiting agency over the production and circulation of knowledge. Finally, social life was reshaped by a Christianised moral order. In this reading, colonialism is not an episode by an epic, Meaning that this is a global design entwined with local histories through a modernity that is racialised, patriarchal, heteronormative, capitalist militarised, and imperial.

Coloniality names the enduring matrices of power that reproduce colonial relations within the present. Its central levers are the control of the economy, authority, gender and sexuality, and knowledge/subjectivity. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) refers to Maldonado-Torres on coloniality refers to long-standing patterns that emerged from colonialism and continue to organise culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge, with race functioning as a core organising principle in a Western-centric world-order. On this basis, decolonial analysis interrogates how these levers persist as invisible structures and epistemic designs that script hierarchy even after formal independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015)

The terrain of knowledge production is therefore pivotal, as emphasised by Mamdani, Mbembe, Quijano, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2024). Ngugi warns that knowledge can obscure reality when generated within epistemic frames calibrated to colonial

hierarchies; Mamdani problematises the politics of method and the presumed neutrality of Western modernity; and Mbembe with Quijano articulate the decolonial triad – power, being, knowledge, as the axes along which coloniality must be unmade (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015) (Ndlovu 2024). This study accordingly adopts decoloniality to interrogate how authority, economy, and knowledge are constituted in post-colony settings, and how they might be reconstituted.

Placed alongside dependency theory, decoloniality both intersects with and diverges from the political-economy critique. The intersection lies in their common diagnosis of structural subordination: dependency foregrounds core-periphery relations in trade, finance, and technology, while decoloniality reveals how those material relations are reproduced and legitimised through law, culture, race, and epistemic authority. The divergence is analytical emphasis. Dependency prioritises the restructuring of production, trade, and finance, highlighting institutional and macroeconomic constraints; decoloniality targets the ontological and epistemic order. This poses questions to us such as: who counts as the knower, which forms of life are valued?; without which material restructuring lacks legibility and legitimacy for the formerly colonised. In short, dependency asks how to reconfigure circuits of capital; decoloniality asks how to recode authority and knowledge so that such reconfiguration is possible and meaningful.

3.2.1 Decolonisation in the Sahel

Decolonisation in French West Africa gathered momentum after the Second World War, when the morality of one state ruling another came under renewed scrutiny (Goody 1982). Beyond formal statehood, decolonisation in Africa is rooted in politics and indigenous social formations. Goody (1982) foregrounds village communities, noting that at independence roughly 80 percent of Africans lived in villages and influenced national politics. This perspective pushes analysis beyond the post-colonial nation to those who sustained resistance during colonial rule.

European expansion recast social relations by inserting new hierarchies among colonial authorities, political elites, and local leaders (Goody 1982). Pre-colonial African practices of conquest often involved cultural integration – conquerors adopting local languages and intermarrying to consolidate rule (Goody 1982). European colonialism inverted this logic by enforcing assimilation to European languages and cultures. Opposition to external domination was therefore not novel; colonial rule amplified and politicised existing repertoires of

resistance. Organisations such as the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society, the Ashanti rebellions, and the West African National Congress exemplified how indigenous actors transformed local grievances into regional political tools (Goody 1982).

Goody (1982) further shoes how resistance politicised everyday life. Education, concentrated in towns and cities, brought rural and urban communities into closer contact, enabling solidarity, communication, and campaigns for literacy and development. Political parties in west Africa emerged from these solidarities, with chiefs supervising candidate selection and thereby formalising popular participation. Decolonisation thus became constitutive of African political development: a thread connecting village agency, party politics, and national projects (Goody 1982). To personify this, Goody (1982) refers to the indigenous kingdom in Northern Ghana and across West Africa. The revolts that happened here were more than just about weakening the colonial powers. These revolts also called out widespread colonial rule across the whole region by bringing together different tribes by using the tools mentioned above.

In contemporary Sahelian contexts, decolonisation remains culturally alive in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Greiner, van Wolputte and Bollig (2022) describe artists in Burkina Faso who articulate resistance and hope through the Federation du Cartel and its project of Pan-African theatre residencies, training and dissemination. Performances bring communities together, mobilising shared histories to imagine futures; Sankara's words continue to animate calls for regional solidarity (Greiner, van Wolputte, and Bollig 2022). Read through this chapter's concerns, such as cultural work speaks to peace-building from below – community cohesion, ethical imagination, and civic mobilisation – as counterweight to externally framed security agendas.

In this section, decolonial theory stands on its own emphasising indigenous agency, cultural autonomy, and the reversal of enforced assimilation. Yet it also intersects with dependency: when peace-building and security are brokered through external languages, funds, and doctrines, they risk reproducing neo-colonial dependencies rather than consolidating local autonomy. The Sahel's cultural initiatives therefore double as a test of whether "security" aligns with community-defined liberation or it subsumed into external priorities.

3.3 Dependency theory

To compliment the decolonial lens, this study draws on dependency theory to analyse development and the economy within the current global world order. Randolf (1980) defines dependency theory as a structured relation of domination between metropolitan and peripheral

economies. Six features follow: 1) peripheral economies are shaped and deformed by shifts in global capitalism; 2) they rely on exports of one or few primary commodities and labour-intensive sectors for foreign exchange; 3) local elites broker external trade and are materially rewarded; 4) authoritarian regimes are favoured as "solutions" to underdevelopment; 5) elite gains coexist with worker marginalisation; and 6) consumerist capitalism erodes local cultures as international market logics prevail (Randfolf 1980)

Randolf (1980) offers a critical reformulation: dependency, when framed as independent capitalist development, can appeal to neo-colonial logics by postponing socialist transformation. On this view, treating foreign domination as the sole cause of underdevelopment risks idealism and sidelines the national-democratic and socialist stages required for qualitative change. Competing interpretations this range from reformist (capitalism can be domesticated) to radical (global socialism is necessary), but both keep the question of sovereignty and popular agency at the centre (Angotti 1981).

Blaney (1996) re-situates dependency by interrogating its sovereignty focus through post-colonial thinking. If "autonomy" is imagined only as national autonomy, peripheral states may reproduce domination internally: diversifying economies by compelling communities into externally defined specialisations, thereby eroding local self-governance (Blaney 1996). Recasting autonomy as relational, grounded in community decisions about how and why to develop, protects cultural difference and resists the homogenising pressures of global production and consumption (Blaney 1996).

Dependency theory is distinct in centring global capitalist structures, elite brokerage, and class outcomes; decolonial theory is distinct in centring cultural-epistemic autonomy and indigenous agency. They intersect where external economic and security linkages translate into political tutelage: elite-managed "solutions" may entrench dependence even as they invoke sovereignty. Read together, they offer a composite test for this study: whether purportedly sovereign choices (e.g. security partnerships, development models) delink from hierarchical circuits of value and embed community defined autonomy.

In dependency terms, peace-building and security assistance can function as conduits of external control' elite intermediaries, conditional resource flows, and imported doctrines reshape local priorities. Linking back to the Sahel, the measure of non-dependency is not only who provides security by how such arrangements redistribute authority, towards communities or back to gatekeeping elites. This provides the hinge to the research questions: assessing

whether the Burkinabe junta's initial declarations and actions reflect decolonial delinking or replicate dependency under new barriers.

3.3.1 Development and dependency in West Africa

Addressing why countries in West Africa diverge in development, Viegi (2016) argues that colonial legacies persist most visibly through education systems implanted during colonisation, These systems tie African states to former colonisers, remain outdated, and constrain economic transformation. As state institutions in their own right, education systems are endogenous to deep historical processes that shape present-day development paths (Viegi 2016). The extractive economic model institutionalised under colonial rule bequeathed ill-suited institutions, reinforcing cultural hegemony via schooling and entrenching path-dependent dependency.

Beyond domestic institutions, regional structures matter. Aniuwo (1999) contends that Africa's limited regional and interstate organisations have left the continent politically and economically balkanised. In Francophone states, dependency theory has been applied to France's post-colonial relationships to show how bilateralism, insisted upon by Paris, ties countries into nation-specific arrangements that hinder multilateral regional integration (Aniuwo 1999). Using Gabon under Omar Bongo as an illustration, Aniuwo (1999), describes a pattern of clientelism that secures France's foreign policy interests and sustains long-standing ties.

For Aniuwo (1999), addressing underdevelopment requires reconfiguring foreign policy and looking inward for solutions. As long as the CFA franc and clientelist ties persist, advantages accrue primarily to French exports and investment. Where internal unity and regional cohesion are weak, political elites do not counter the economic and political implications of French influence; decolonising efforts are thus blunted. The result is a double loss: regional schemes that could reduce dependency are weakened, while reliance on external states displaces domestic and regional capacities.

In this bilateral environment, peace-building and security cooperation are channelled through the same clientelist ties and foreign-policy logics, aligning agendas with external proprotors rather than regional or community-defined needs. This reproduces neo-colonial dependency: security assistance and "stability" frameworks become additional levers that reinforce monetary and diplomatic dependence rather than broadening agency.

In this subsection, dependency analysis explains development constraints through colonial era institutions (education), monetary arrangements (CFA), bilateralism, and elite brokerage (Viegi 2016; Aniuwo 1999). Decolonial analysis stands on its own highlighting the cultural-epistemic stakes of reforming education to undo colonial hegemony. They intersect where institutional reform of education must be matched by structural delinking from bilateral monetary and policy ties; otherwise, culture-centred decolonisation is neutralised by continuing dependency. For this study, these dynamics help evaluate whether claims of decolonial change in Burkina Faso address both knowledge systems (education) and material structures (currency, regionalism , and externally framed security).

3.3.3 Education and dependency in West Africa

Education sits at the intersection of decolonisation and dependency. In South Africa, the #FeesMustFall movement mobilised students around decolonising language and lowering the cost of tertiary education, contesting university spaces so they better serve black and disadvantaged students (Blackmur 2021). The stakes are high because education undergirds social reproduction and development far beyond the classroom.

As Viegi (2016) argues, education systems implanted during colonisation tie African countries to former metropoles, are often outdated, and constrain economic transformation. As state institutions in their own right, they are endogenous to deep historical processes that shape present development paths. In colonial West Africa, schooling functioned as indirect rule and propaganda: systems explicitly trained chiefs and their sons to mediate between colonial government and indigenous communities (Viegi 2016). In Francophone Africa, French policy embedded the ideology that France and its colonies formed a single polity; pupils were taught by French teachers, in French, with French textbooks. Elites who assimilated were granted French citizenship, conditional on relinquishing African heritage, family law, and customs, producing cultural alienation and material dependence on France (Viegi 2016). Unsurprisingly, such elites tended to sustain imperial relationships and filled government posts, contributing to "stable", long-standing rule aligned with French interests (Viegi 2016). The widening gap between elite income/ideology and the mass of former colonies, exposed French West Africa to more frequent coup d'etat (Viegi 2016).

These dynamics underscore the need for educational reform that decolonises curricula and elite formation, narrowing the distance between governors and governed. They also set up the next step in this study's argument: education-driven cultural-epistemic change must be paired with

structural delinking, including monetary arrangements such as the CFA franc, if West African states are to move from symbolic to substantive autonomy.

When colonial-era education reproduces elite pipelines loyal to external centres, security and peace-building agendas are channelled through the same intermediaries. Assistance, training, and doctrine can then prioritise external stability metrics over community-defined security, reinforcing neo-colonial dependency even as authority appears indigenised.

Decolonial analysis stands independently here in its focus on cultural-epistemic autonomy (language, curriculum, elite socialisation). Dependency analysis stands independently in tracing structural hierarchies (elite brokerage, citizenship conditionalities, alignment with the metropole) and their political outcomes (coup propensity). They intersect where education reforms must be coupled with material reconfiguration (currency, fiscal, and regional policy)" without the latter, decolonised classrooms risk reproducing dependent states.

3.3.4 Development and currency in West Africa

Established in 1945 as a colonial currency to facilitate transfers between France and its colonies, the CFA franc remains in use across many former colonies (Sylla 2020). Decolonial and Pan-African movements have increasingly challenged its continuation, emphasising the currency's embedding in oppressive policies that privileged metropolitan firms, allowing investment and disinvestment with minimal exchange-rate frictions and easy repatriation of surpluses. Pegging the CFA to the euro often misaligned exchange rates with local economic needs, while helping France rebuild after the Second World War (Sylla 2020).

According to Sylla (2020), France retained a veto over statutory matters and control over monetary policy across the zone. This architecture has endured for nearly seven decades because it suits large French enterprises holding monopoly positions in French West Africa. Political arrangements also mattered" elite commitments to "Fran-Afrique" were treated as a condition for long-term incumbency, with the extended rule of Paul Biya in Cameroon cited as illustrative. For African intellectuals, the implication is clear: the CFA franc signals a lack of sovereignty across political, economic, and social spheres because it disproportionately serves French interests (Sylla 2020). Against this backdrop, this study considers the exist of Burkina Faso and neighbouring states from the franc zone and how such a move would affect economic dependence on France.

French West Africa has repeatedly attempted to distance itself from the CFA through regional economic integration, but dependency hinders integration (Aniuwo 1999). The Communaute

Economique de l'Afrique de l'ouest (CEAO), formed in 1972, aimed to boost intra-regional trade through custom tariffs and free circulation of goods; progress on liberalisation was slow, and intra-community trade barely expended (Aniuwo 1999). Earlier, the Organisation Commune Africaine Malgache et Mauricienne (OCAM), established in 1965 but sixteen Francophone states to strengthen cooperation and harmonise foreign, economic, and cultural policies, faltered amid the absence of a common currency and reluctance by some members to forgo the advantages of CFA convertibility, tensions sharpened by the 1994 devaluation (Aniuwo 1999). The pattern is consistent: dependency rejects integration by anchoring states to extra-regional monetary logics and bilateral ties.

Monetary dependence conditions security choices: when external actors hold vetoes over monetary policy and elites are tied to bilateral arrangements that favour metropolitan interests, peace-building and security assistance tend to follow the same channels. Budgets, doctrines, and partnerships align with external priorities, reinforcing neo-colonial dependency even when security is framed as domestically driven.

In this subsection, dependency analysis stands on its own trancing how the CFA's institutional design, elite brokerage, and failed regionalism entrench subordination (Sylla 2020; Aniuwo 1999). Decolonial analysis stands independently in foregrounding sovereignty – currency as a symbol and instrument of self-determination – and the push from Pan-African movements to end monetary tutelage. They intersect where currency sovereignty becomes the material test of decolonial claims: without delinking from the CFA's veto structures, decolonial rhetoric risks remaining symbolic. For this study, currency thus becomes a key criterion for evaluating whether the Burkinabe junta's declarations and actions amount to decolonisation or replicate dependency under new banners.

3.3.5 Dependency and peacebuilding in the Sahel

The Sahel's security crisis profoundly shapes the politics of decolonisation and dependency. As Umar (2022) maps, multiple external and regional actors operate simultaneously – UN, EU, G5 Sahel, and bilateral partners such as France and the United States – creating a dense and often fragmented intervention landscape.

The EU has funded the EUTM Mali and the EU Capacity Building Mission across Mali and Niger, initiative criticised for privileging border management and capacity building over the professionalisation of Sahelian security forces (Umar 2022). The UNs MINUSMA, tasked with implementing the 2015 peace agreements in Mali, became of the most dangerous peacekeeping

missions, with 269 deaths from explosives. Responding to persistent threats redirected mission resources toward protection, while insecurity curtailed community engagement, limiting MINUSMA's ability to effect change (Umar 2022).

French counterterrorism efforts extended beyond UN frameworks: Operation Serval (2012-2014), Operation Barkhane (from 2014), and the French-led European Task Force Takuba (launched 2020, in conjunction with the AU) focused on the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso borderlands (Umar 2022). Barkhane drew growing popular criticism for failing to adapt to evolving dynamics; in Mali, French alignment with the MNLA – a key factor in the 2012 insurgency – fuelled discontent (Umar 2022). France ultimately withdrew from Mali in 2022, reshaping the region's security partnerships and intersecting with emerging relationships with Russia, with implications for UN, EU, and AU efforts.

Regionally, the G5 Sahel (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania) launched a joint force in 2018, yet irregular funding and doubts about military efficacy have stalled impact (Umar 2022). The United States contributes through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), an interagency platform (DoD, State, USAID), with Niger as the largest beneficiary. Assistance to these countries by the United States was intermittently halted amid insurgency pressures. Critics argue US efforts spread meagre resources across fragmented lines of effort, limited stabilisation gains (Umar 2022).

The humanitarian emergency is severe. Across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, around 13 million people require aid; 7.4 million face acute hunger; and over 1.5 million are internally displaced (Murphy 2016). Overlapping interventions complicate coordination, In Mali, the proliferation of missions since 2013 (French and UN operations, G5 Sahel, Takuba, EUTM) fragmented humanitarian access (Murphy 2016). In Burkina Faso, self-defence groups have intensified violence and displacement; communities are caught between jihadists, self-defence forces, and the Burkinabe military, with abscises reported across actors (Murphy 2016; Lara and Delsol 2020). In Niger, rising attacks targeted aid workers – 2019 marked a peak – further restricting assistance (Murphy 2016). These dynamics increase reliance on external security assistance, while domestic political backlash continually recalibrates military objectives (Murphy 2016).

A longer view clarifies how such reliance became entrenched. At independence, African states inherited military structures, personnel, and equipment from European powers (Crocker 1974). According to Crocker (1974), transfer occurred via disengagement (recasting British/French

defence policy and roles, reconsidering African manpower aboard) and institution building, which unfolded three policy sets: 1) Africanisation of officers – filtered through divergent British and French philosophies (Commonwealth "devolution" vs French assimilation), generating mistrust among elites and politicising the military; 2) localisation of armies – placing forces under territorial authorities and new administrative-financial relations, with outcomes that later shaped post-colonial dependence; 3) military development – converting colonial forces into national armies, which demanded new skills, technology, and finance; depending dependence on external support.

In Francophone African, Charbonneau (2014) argues that the imperial legacy reorganised itself within contemporary peacebuilding: militarised politics, transnational elite networks, and dominant ideas render interventionist practices hegemonic while appearing "international" rather than imperial. French-initiated interventions recur, and treaty provisions enabling Paris to act, or abstain, sustain continuity in influence (Crocker 1974; Charbonneau 2014). Read together, these accounts suggest that military decolonisation has remained partial: institutional continuity and intervention logics anchor proto-national order tied to external power.

Across these initiatives, security assistance often channels budgets, doctrine, and operational priorities through external pipelines. The result is a dependency loop" interventions justify their assistance; elite intermediaries manage access; humanitarian needs rise with insecurity; and domestic reform capacity is displaced by external frameworks. Even were stabilisation occurs, the architecture tends to consolidate gatekeeping elites and external vetoes – a hallmarks of neo-colonial dependency (Umar 2022; Murphy 2016; Charbonneau 2014; Crocker 1974).

Decolonial perspectives emphasise popular agency, cultural autonomy, and security defined by communities rather than by external metrics. Dependency analysis foreground how aid, missions, and military reform reproduce hierarchical ties and elite brokerage. The two are distinct yet intersect where security partnerships claim sovereignty but entrench subordination, through funding conditionalities, training doctrines, and treaty base prerogatives. For this study, the test is whether evolving partnerships in Burkina Faso delink from these hierarchies, redistribute authority downward (away from gatekeepers), and translate into reduced external reliance alongside improved civilian protection.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter developed a two-lens framework – decoloniality and dependency – to interpret politics, development, and security in the Sahel, with Burkina Faso in focus. The decolonial

thread emphasised indigenous agency, cultural epistemic autonomy, and the long arc of resistance from village politics to education-driven mobilisation to contemporary artistic solidarities (Goldberg 1986; Goody 1982; Greiner, van Wolputte, and Bollig 2022). The dependency thread tranced how colonial economic and institutional forms – elite brokerage, extractive education systems, bilateralism, monetary tutelage – organise present hierarchies (Randolf 1980; Angotti 1981; Blaney 1996; Viegi 2016; Aniuwo 1999; Sylla 2020).

Read independently, decolonial theory centres the recovery of voice, language, and locally defined horizons of development and security; dependency theory centres structural constraints in the world economy, elite incentives, and institutional path dependence. Read together, they clarify how claims of sovereignty can be neutralised by material circuits of control – education pipelines aligned to metropoles, the CFA franc arrangements and blocked regionalism, and security architectures that route budgets, doctrines, and authority through external pipelines (Viegi 2016; Sylla 2020; Aniuwo 1999; Umar 2022; Murphy 206; Charbonneau 2014; Crocker 1974).

This chapter is also linked peace-building/security to neo-colonial dependency. EU training and capacity-building missions, MINUSMA's protection turn in Mali, French counterterrorism operations, the G5 Sahel force, and US programmes (TSCTP) illustrate how overlapping interventions can fragments authority and humanitarian access while consolidating gatekeeping elites (Umar 2022; Murphy 2016' Lara and Delsol 2020). Historically, partial military "decolonisation" via Africanisation, localisation, and externally financed development, kept inherited doctrines and treaty prerogatives in place (Crocker 1974). Alongside this, contemporary interventionism often reproduces imperial logics under the language of peacebuilding (Charbonneau 2014).

From this synthesis, the chapter distils operational criteria for the analysis to follow: 1) cultural-epistemic autonomy – which are tangible moves that elevate local languages, knowledge, and civic participation beyond symbolic gestures (Goody 1982; Greiner, van Wolputte, and Bollig 2022); 2) Institutional reform of education which is to rework elite pipelines that reproduce metropolitan alignment (Viegi 2016); 3) Monetary and regional delinking which speaks to credible stems on currency sovereignty and regional integration not subordinated to extra-regional vetoes (Sylla 2020; Aniuwo 1999); 4) security reorientation which means to have partnerships that reduce external conditionality, redistribute authority downward, and improve civilian protection and humanitarian access without depending reliance (Umar 2022; Murphy

2016; Charbonneau 20140; 6) elite brokerage and class outcomes give evidence that gains accrue beyond gatekeeping elites to workers and rural majorities (Randolf 1980; Angotti 1981).

Applied to Burkina Faso, those criteria allow a direct assessment of the study's research questions of whether the initial declarations of the Burkinabe junta and subsequent actions can be read as decolonisation and whether the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso is indicative of a wider trajectory towards decolonisation in the Sahel.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the study investigates whether the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso is indicative of decolonisation in the Sahel. It sets out a systemic literature review (SLR) to identify, screen, and synthesise relevant scholarship and high-quality policy materials in a transparent and replicable manner, ensuring rigour in source selection and contribution to the field. The use of a SLR is appropriate for this paper because the relevant scholarship is highly

fragmented, spanning political science, international relations, African studies, and decolonial theory, with no single body of work providing a comprehensive account. Unlike a traditional narrative review, an SLR applies explicit, transparent, and replicable procedure to identify, screen, and evaluate sources, thereby reducing selection bias and ensuring methodological rigor. This approach is particularly valuable in an emerging field where scholarly interpretations diverge: while some analyses frame recent coups in the Sahel as democratic backsliding or security crisis, others interpret them as ruptures with neo-colonial structures. Through systematic synthesis, the review makes it possible to map the contours of this debate, highlight points of consensus and disagreement, and uncover silences or underexplored dimensions. Moreover, because the study is theoretically grounded in decoloniality or dependency theory, SLR enables a structured assessment of how these frameworks have been applied across contexts, ensuring the research is anchored in a broad and critically examined evidence base (Petticrew and Roberts 2006). The decolonial and dependency frameworks, developed in the theory chapter, function here strictly as an analytical lens, not as methods.

The review follows a PRISMA-aligned workflow as a tool (reporting and screening checklist) to document the steps from identification to screening to eligibility to inclusion and to record reasons for exclusion. PRISMA is used to structure and report the review process; it is not treated as a theory. Together, the SLR design, the PRISMA reporting tool, and the clearly specified analytical lenses provide mechanisms for rigorous, ethical, and auditable approach to answering the research question.

4.2 Paradigm

This study is situated within a critical-interpretivist paradigm. Knowledge about coups, decoloniality, and dependency is treated as historically situated and power-mediated. Theory and evidence are mutually informing: the decolonial and dependency lenses orient what is observed; findings refine how these lenses are applied to the Sahel (with Burkina Faso as the focal case).

4.3 Design

The Research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to transparently identify, screen, and synthesise dispersed scholarship and high-quality policy materials relevant to the two research questions. This approach is particularly valuable in an emerging field where scholarly interpretations diverge: while some analyses frame recent coups in the Sahel as democratic backsliding or security crisis, others interpret them as ruptures with neo-colonial structures.

Through systematic synthesis, the review makes it possible to map the contours of this debate, highlight points of consensus and disagreement, and uncover silences or underexplored dimensions (Petticrew and Roberts 2006). To enhance clarity and reproducibility, the review followed a PRISMA aligned workflow as a reporting tool (not a theory): records were identified, screened, assessed for eligibility and included or excluded (Higgins et al. 2019)

4.4 Guiding research questions

1. Is the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso indicative of decolonisation in the Sahel?

2. What has been addressed in the region to encourage decolonisation?

(These research questions operate as the organising frame for selection, and synthesis.)

4.5 Data (sources, search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria)

The source universe for this study comprises of the following: The University of the Witwatersrand Library holdings and databases; JSTOR; Google Scholar; African Archives; Afrobarometer; ACCORD; reputable news channels; the Burkinabe government website; and NGO reports relevant to the topic in Burkina Faso.

4.6 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria

- Type: Peer-reviewed articles; scholarly books/chapters; reputable policy/think-tank and multilateral reports; primary texts (e.g. speeches or charters) already used in prior chapters; high-quality local news reports.
- Topical fit: addresses at least one core domain tied to: a) decoloniality (cultural/epistemic sovereignty, language, popular agency); b) dependency (education systems, CFA franc/currency; bilateralism/aid/elite brokerage); c) security/peace-building and their linkage to neo-colonial dependency; d) coups/civil military dynamics in the Sahel.
- Geography: Burkina Faso and the Sahel (Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania) with West Africa comparators when they illuminate Sahelian patterns.
- Time: colonial to contemporary; no hard start date provided topical fit is demonstrated.
- Language: English and French (where accessible/translated for accuracy)

- Quality: Methodological transparency for academic sources, institutional credibility and stated methods for grey literature; provenance check for primary political texts.

Exclusion Criteria

- Type: opinion pieces without evidence basis; blogs or unvetted outlets; duplicate items; purely methodological texts unrelated to the topic.
- Topical misfit: items that do not materially inform decoloniality/dependency or the Sahel/Burkina Faso.
- Insufficient detail: sources lacking authorship, date, or retrievable publication context.
- Unresolvable bias: material whose claims cannot be corroborated or that are inflammatory/discriminatory without analytical value.

4.7 Limitations

This study would like to note and acknowledge three main limitations when carrying out this research. The first is language access as some relevant French-language literature and policy documents may have been inaccessible or imperfectly translated, with potential effects on inclusion. Secondly, given the ongoing developments, recency/volatility is a limitation because evidence is time-bound to what has been documented with sufficient detail during the last two years. Thirdly, heterogenous quality is a factor which takes into account combining academic literature and grey literature introduces variance in method transparency; this was mitigated through a quality appraisal where possible.

4.7 Ethics

No primary data involving human participants were collected; ethical approval was not required. This study observes diligent citation, careful paraphrase/quotation, and avoidance of misinterpretation. Where French-language materials were used, translations were handled conservatively to preserve meaning,

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter set out how the study will answer the question: is the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso indicative of decolonisation in the Sahel? It adopted a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to

identify, screen, and synthesise relevant scholarship and high-quality policy materials in a transparent, rigorous, and replicable manner. The decolonial and dependency frameworks developed in the "theory" chapter serve here as strictly analytical lenses, guiding what is extracted and how findings are interpreted; they are not part of the method itself. To ensure that the review process follows a standardised procedure, the chapter applied a PRISMA-aligned workflow as a tool for reporting and screening that structures movement from identification to screening, to eligibility, to inclusion. PRISMA is solely used to organise and report the SLR; it is not treated as a theory.

This chapter also specified the source universe, inclusion/exclusion criteria. And clarified the coding-framework which links four domains – cultural epistemic, political-institutional, economic-monetary, and security/peace-building – to research the questions. A thematic synthesis will integrate coded evidence to assesses: 1) whether junta declarations and actions made in Burkina Faso are plausibly decolonial; and 2) what has been addressed in the region that could encourage decolonisation.

Acknowledged limitations include language access (French-language materials not always available or fully translatable), the recency and volatility of events, and the quality variation across academic and grey literature these are mitigated through the use of the PRISMA tool. Ethically, no primary human data was collected; the review proceeds with diligent citation, careful interpretation, and conservative translation practices.

This methodological foundation enables an auditable pathway from evidence to inference. The next chapter applies this procedure to assemble corpus, evaluating Burkina Faso's post-coup trajectory against the study's two research questions.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how Burkina Faso's post 2022 trajectory translates the study's theoretical lenses, decoloniality and dependency, into observable practice. Building on the Systematic Literature Review and the PRISMA tool developed earlier, the chapter organises the evidence into four interlocking domains: geopolitical/regional security, economic policy,

social-cultural change, and ideological orientation. Within each of these domains the intentions of the junta are distinguished from outcomes and impact. This structure allows us to assess whether declared aims of sovereignty, self-reliance, and pan-African solidarity are materialising, as people-centred decolonisation or being re-routed into reconfigured dependency.

First, the chapter traces regional alignment: the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), withdrawal from ECOWAS and other multilateral forums, and the rejection of Western Military footprints, alongside emergent join-security ambitions. These moves are read as tests of decolonial autonomy and, simultaneously, for their susceptibility to new external pipelines flagged by dependency theory.

Second, it analyses economic initiatives under Captain Ibrahim Traore, expanded public investment and domestic financing, resource nationalism in mining, agricultural and rural financial reforms, and AES-linked industrial aspirations, alongside the continued presence of Bretton Woods frameworks. Here the decolonial promise of delinking is weighed against structural constraints, implementation capacity, and exposure to neo-colonial extractivist bargains.

Third, the chapter evaluates social and culture measures: the removal of colonial symbols, the elevation of indigenous languages and cultural production, and Pan-African mobilisation – while interrogating inclusivity (women and youth), humanitarian pressures, and risks of a militarised civic space. The analysis asks whether symbolic breaks are backed by system-level reforms that broaden participation and redistribute authority.

Fourth, it considers ideological change: sovereignty re-inscribed as governing axiom, the revalorisation of Sankarism, and a stated rejection of liberal-democratic templates. The discussion links these claims to concrete institutional changes, highlighting tensions between state-centric control and the decolonial requirement for people-centred agency.

The chapter proceeds in three clearly demarcated parts: findings (evidence presentation as intentions followed by their outcomes within each domain, with an explicit subsection on AES, ECOWAS, and joint regional security efforts), discussion (cross-domain synthesis through the decolonial and dependency theory lenses), and recommendations (practical steps to convert symbolic delinking into material decolonisation while minimising substitutional dependency). Throughout, the touchstones remain consistent: operationalisation, rather than rhetoric, distributional effects rather than elite signalling, and the extent to which regional instruments,

especially within AES, are designed and delivered to expand Burkinabe and Sahelian autonomy in practice.

5.1.1 New Bilateral, multilateral, and regional relationships reshaping Burkina Faso's geopolitical posture

Since the recent wave of coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, new junta leaders have pursued regional re-alignments and foreign-policy shifts intended to resist entrenched Western dominance and neo-liberal conditionality. Post-2022, Burkina Faso has deliberately repositioned itself, reframing sovereignty and self-determination as guiding principles. Read through decolonial and dependency lenses, these moves either: 1) facilitate pathways toward decolonisation or 2) risk redirecting dependency to new patrons.

5.1.2 The Alliance of Sahel States (AES): Regionalism as resistance

The Alliance of Sahel States (AES) embodies a turn towards regionalism as resistance. Through the Liptako-Gourma Charter signed in September 2022, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso articulate a Pan-African model grounded in self-determination and sovereignty, pairing this with a mutual-defence pact intended to replace external security interventions and to coordinate security, economic and political priorities. This stance has been reinforced by coordinated exits from multilateral bodies perceived as instruments of external control, notably withdrawal from ECOWAS in January 2025 in protest at ineffectiveness and sanction-driven, western aligned approaches which perpetuate neo-colonial authority (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Aboagyre 2025; Klomegah 2025). The trio have likewise distanced themselves from other forums, including their announced exit in March 2025 from the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) on the grounds that it served Paris's geopolitical preferences, and earlier departures from the G5 Sahel in 2023 amid frustrations with its security performance (Kulkarni 2025; Ross 2023).

Read through the lens of decoloniality, the AES recentres endogenous coordination and sovereignty claims; read through the lens of dependency theory – particularly Amin (1972) and Angotti (1981) it underscores a familiar caution: without structural economic transformation, proposals such as an AES passport and independent currency risk remaining largely symbolic, and effectiveness will hinge on the alliance's capacity to operationalise security economic

commitments and to mobilise resources and capital domestically (Amin 1972; Angotti 1981; Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Mwangi 2025).

5.1.3 The rejection of Western Military presence: disentangling from the legacies of the Francafrique

A central pillar of Burkina Faso's post-2022 realignment has been the explicit rejection of Western military footprints in the Sahel. In 2023, Ouagadougou formally requested the withdrawal of French forces, mirroring earlier Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger moves – and, subsequently, the departure of the United States personnel, framing these steps as necessary to restore strategic autonomy and recalibrate security governance (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Nzuki 2024; Brown 2024). This course of action challenges the longstanding architecture of Francafrique, in which counter-terrorism partnerships and external training missions have anchored France's regional influence, and signals a deliberate effort to reconfigure the norms and instruments through which security has been organised in the Sahel (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Brown 2024). As Rumeka (2024) argues, France's historical posture in West Africa has often been paternalistic, with military cooperation operating less as a partnership of equals than as a mechanism that preserves asymmetric power relations; the expulsions thus mark both a material and symbolic rupture with this logic.

Read through a decolonial lens, the repudiation of external forces resonates with Migolo's (2009) notion of "epistemic disobedience", insofar as it contests the Euro-American claim to neutral expertise in defining regional security problems and their solutions. In this interpretation, security is repositioned as a domain to be conceptualised and governed endogenously. Yet as the section that follows cautions, such delinking also creates the possibility re-routed dependency if new alignments merely substitute one set of external patrons for another. The strategic challenge, therefore, is to ensure that the rejection of Western military presence does not culminate in a reproduction of dependency under different auspices, the rather in a security architecture accountable to domestic priorities and regional coordination (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Nzuki 2024; Brown 2024; Rukema 2023; Mignolo 2009).

5.1.4 The Russian Pivot: Strategic Realignment or Reconfigured Dependency?

Burkina Faso's deepening engagement with the Russian Federation has unfolded alongside Moscow's broader effort to recalibrate its global posture following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the resulting Western isolation (Vuksanovic 2023; Gotz and Kaas 2024; Siegel 2021). In this context, Russia has positioned itself in the Sahel as an alternative security and

diplomatic partner, aligning with the governments seeks to curtail Western military presence and to assert greater strategic autonomy. Analysts note a toolkit that spans hard and soft instruments – arms transfers, the deployment or facilitation of private military companies, and information operations that challenge Western narratives – aimed at expanding influence and signalling Moscow's readiness to underwrite regime security (Gotz and Kaas 2024; Siegle 2021). From Ouagadougou's vantage point, the appeal lies partly in Russia's willingness to provide security assistance with fewer explicit political conditionalities, a feature that offers leaders short-term room to manoeuvre vis-à-vis domestic threats and regional realignment (Horak et al 2024).

Read through a decolonial lens, Russia's lack of direct colonial past in West Africa can generate a degree of psychological and diplomatic space for Burkina Faso to re-imagine its external partnerships and to resist Euro-Atlantic tutelage (Vuksanovic 2023). Yet, dependency perspectives introduce caution. Empirical patterns across Africa point to transactional, elite-driven relationships, including resource-for-security exchanges and privileged access to mining concessions – particularly in gold and uranium – that risk reproducing extractive dynamics under a new patron (Millon 2024; Gotz and Kaas 2024; Siegle 2021). The strategic test, therefore, is not the rhetorical break with Western partners, but whether the agreements with Russia embed transparent terms, local value addition, and governance safeguards that prevent neo-extractivism and curtail elite capture (Horak et al. 2024; Gotz and Kaas 2024). Absent such conditions, the Russian pivot may amount to less material decolonisation than to a reconfigured dependency – a substitution of external pipelines without altering the underlying distribution of power and benefits (Vuksanovic 2023; Millon 2024; Siegle 2021).

5.1.5 Turkey, China, And The Expansion Of South-South Cooperation

Alongside the rejection of Western security tutelage and the exploratory turn toward Russa, Burkina Faso has widened its network of South-South partnerships, most notably with Turkey and China. Turkish engagement in the Sahel has taken a multifaceted form – combining defence cooperation, infrastructure support, and religious-cultural diplomacy – implemented through pragmatic ties with state institutions and civil society, including scholarships and Islamic educational networks (Lebovich 2023). Although more limited in scale than Sankara's operations in Libya or Somalia, Turkish involvement in Burkina Faso has generally been received as respectful of sovereignty and attentive to local interlocutors ("Unravelling Turkish Involvement in the Sahel" 2023). By contrast, China's presence is driven primary by economic logics that fit within a broader South-South template – financing infrastructure, advancing

telecommunications, and participating in resource extraction. From a dependency perspective, however, such engagement require safeguards against neo-extractivism and over-concentration in primary commodities; diversification remains imperative if Burkina Faso is to reduce vulnerability to external shocks and avoid reproducing enclave economies (Ramani 2021). At the same time, the perception that China adopts a non-interference stance in domestic politics has encouraged Ouagadougou to anticipate a more transactional, development-oriented partnership compared with prior Western arrangements ("Unravelling Turkish Involvement in the Sahel" 2023; Ramani 2021).

Read through decolonial and dependency lenses together, these ties are ambivalent; they can widen room for policy autonomy and dilute Euro-Atlantic conditionality, yet they will only amount to material delinking if contracts embed transparent terms, local value addition, and institutional safeguards against elite capture. In this respect, leveraging Turkish and Chinese partnerships to advance the Liptako-Gourma agenda – regional infrastructure, energy interconnections, and nascent industrial policy, offers an opportunity to translate symbolic realignment into operational sovereignty; absent from such design, South-South cooperation risks becoming another circuit of re-routed dependency (Lebovich 2023).

5.1.5 The ECOWAS split and institutional re-imagination

Burkina Faso's withdrawal from ECOWAS, undertaken alongside Mali and Niger within the AES framework, has been framed as an opportunity to rethink regional integration from the bottom-up, privileging sovereignty and insulation from external conditionalities (Aboagyre 2025). In this reading, departure from sanctions-centric, Western-aligned regional order opens political space to design endogenously driven institutions whose mandates prioritise security, mobility, and development as experienced in the Sahel rather than as prescribed from outside (Aboagyre 2025). Yet, the promise of institutional re-imagination is tempered by familiar risks; unless new arrangements are shielded from elite capture and external manipulation, they may reproduce the very hierarchies they seek to escape (Aboagyre 2025). Against this backdrop, AES proposals for a regional passport and independent currency signal an ambition to delink administratively and monetarily, thereby facilitating intra-Sahelian movement and trade on terms set by member states themselves; however, the credibility of this agenda will depend on demonstrable progress in design, sequencing, and resourcing (Mwangi 2025).

5.2 Economic development under Captain Ibrahim Traore: Intentions to delink from the West and pursue decolonisation

Since the 2022 coup, Burkina Faso's leadership has paired geopolitical realignment with an economic agenda frame around sovereignty, domestic capacity, and regional coordination. Below, findings are organised by intentions and outcomes with each theme explicitly linked to decolonial and dependency theory lenses.

5.2.1 Repositioning national development: sovereignty through strategic investment

Since 2022, Burkina Faso has articulated an economic orientation aimed at reclaiming developmental autonomy from Western actors by prioritising public investment in infrastructure, energy, agriculture, and social protection (Klomegah 2025; "Burkina Faso Economic Update 2024 – Special Chapter Maintaining Reform Momentum on Social Assistance," 2024). By the end of 2023, this portfolio accounted for an estimated 11.2 per vent of GDP, signalling an intentional shift toward self-reliant development and the cultivation of an internal demand cycle less exposed to external shocks ("Project Completion Report (PCR) For Public Sector Operations," n.d). Read through decolonial theory, this turn resonates with calls to break from Eurocentric growth templates in favour of local-capacity building and structure transformation (Amin 1972; Viegi 2016). A salient example is the Fonds de soutien patriotique (FSP), a domestically financed mechanism that reportedly mobilised over 86 billion CFA francs in its first eighteen months, funding social expenditures and strengthening the response of security forces – an effort that aligns with delinking as an epistemic and material practice (Mignolo 2009; "Patriotic Support Fund" 2024).

At the same time, dependency perspectives temper the reading of these initiatives as full autonomy. Historical experience suggests that attempts to delink often yield partial or distorted forms of autonomy when underlying financial circuits remain externally anchored (Viegi 2016). In Burkina Faso's case, a significant share of budget support and programme finance continues to flow through the International Monetary Fund, the World bank, and the African Development Bank, embedding the economy within the prevailing global financial order even as the government pursues endogenous investment ("Burkina Faso Bank Intervention Strategy | African Development Bank Group," n.d). The strategic test, therefore, is whether domestic instruments such as the FSP and the expanded public investment envelope can be

institutionalised at scale and sequenced with macro-fiscal management to reduce reliance on external financing while sustaining growth and social protection.

5.2.2 Resource Nationalism And The Reconfiguration Of Extractive Economies

A core plank of the post-2022 agenda is the reassertion of state control over Burkina Faso's mineral endowment – principally gold, uranium, and lithium – through measures that include the nationalisation of gold refining and the renegotiation of mining contracts (Klomegah 2025; Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Cascias 2025; Saidou 2023). Framed as a big to restore economic sovereignty, this turn is intelligible within decolonial thought: by internalising more of the value chain, the state seeks to dismantle colonial economic infrastructures that historically positioned African polities as primary-commodity exporters in global hierarchies structured by metropolitan economies (Fanon and Markmann n.d; Goody 1982). In this ready, resource nationalism functions as a practical modality of delinking – an attempt to move from enclave extraction toward domestic processing and policy autonomy consonant with the broader political realignment (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Saidou 2023).

Yet, dependency perspectives introduce necessary cautions. Without parallel transformation of internal lass relations, robust governance safeguards, and credible mechanisms to prevent state-led extractivism, resource nationalism can produce concentration of rents, elite capture, and corruption, dulling its developmental edge (Viegi 2016). The risks are amplified by the configuration of new external partnerships: in practice, resource-for-security or resource-for-finance exchanges, whether with Russa, Turkey, or China – may simulate diversification while entrenching a neo-extractivist model under different patrons (Gotz and Kaas 2024). The strategic test, therefore, is whether renegotiated contracts and domestic refining are embedded in transparent terms, local value-addition requirements, and public oversights, so that the current pivot amounts to material decolonisation rather than reconfigured dependency (Klomegah 2025; Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Cascias 2025; Saidou 2023; Viegi 2016; Gotz and Kaas 2024).

5.2.3 Reconstructing Agriculture And Rural Financing: A Decolonial Turn

Given that over 80 per cent of Burkinabe livelihoods are tied to agriculture, the administration's creation of a dedicated agribusiness bank under the PACBA initiative signals an intent to revitalise domestic food systems and intra-regional trade while reducing reliance on donor-led responses to food insecurity (AfDB 2024). Read through decolonial theory, this move gestures beyond input – or technology-centric fixes toward epistemic sovereignty, recasting financial

institutions as instruments of people-centred development and aligning with calls to delink from externally scripted development logics (Mignolo 2009; AfDB 2024). In this respect, Burkina Faso's emphasis on agro-financing and local value chains challenges the prevailing orthodoxy that prioritises export crops and projectized interventions, and corresponds with recent critiques of how to decolonise Africa agriculture

5.2.4 AES, Regionalism, And Industrial Aspirations

Burkina Faso's industrial pivot is increasingly articulated through the framework of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), whose economic agenda envisages joint industrial zones, a prospective common currency, and harmonised energy and infrastructure strategies to stimulate intra-regional value creation (Saidou 2023). Read through decolonial theory, this regionalisation of industrial policy seeks to reconfigure development on endogenous terms by building production capabilities and supply chains that are not subordinated to Euro-Atlantic conditionalities (Abogyre 2024). From a dependency perspective, the same agenda is promising to the extent that it can internalise linkages (backward and forward), expand local value addition, and reduce exposure to volatile external demand; yet its credibility ultimately hinges on whether design choices and sequencing overcome capacity constraints identified to Burkina Faso – namely limited institutional coordination and a high degree of informality in the productive sector ("African Development Bank Group Burkina Faso Interim Country Strategy Paper (I-CSP – 2022-2025"). In practical terms, AES industrial proposals will amount to material delinking only if they embed transparent rules of origin, procurement local-content thresholds, and interoperable energy and transport standards that lower transaction costs with the bloc. Absent such institutionalisation, the risk remains that regional rhetoric outpaces implementation, reproducing enclave production and elite capture rather than broad-based transformation (Saidou 2023; Aboagyre 2024; "African Development Bank Group Burkina Faso Interim Country Strategy Paper (I-CSP) 2022-2025").

5.2.5 The Enduring Presence Of Bretton Woods Institutions: Between Co-Optation And Resistance

Despite rhetorical and policy moves toward economic sovereignty, Burkina Faso remains embedded in Bretton Woods – anchored macroeconomic frameworks. The ongoing commitment to reduce the fiscal defect by 3 per cent of GDP by 2027 and continued programme finance through the IMF, World Bank. And regional monetary arrangements (including WAEMU) illustrate the persistence of external policy anchors even as the government pursues

domestically framed investment and industrial initiatives (AfDB 2024). Read through a decolonial lens, this duality reflects the coloniality of finance: the endurance of global monetary and fiscal disciplines that privilege Euro-Atlantic epistemologies of stability and development, thereby circumscribing the space for endogenous policy design (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007). In dependency terms, the reliance on concessional flows, programme triggers, and surveillance mechanisms keeps Burkina Faso tied to external pipelines, reproducing a familiar core-periphery hierarchy in which macro-stabilisation is achieved on terms that may not align with the sequencing needs of structural transformation (AfDB 2024).

The tension is, therefore, not merely discursive but institutional. On one hand, the administration's resource nationalism, agrifood financing, and AES-linked ambitions signal a turn toward autonomy; on the other, the conditionality architecture shapes budget envelopes, debt dynamics, and the pace of public investment, risking what decolonial scholars describe as epistemic dependency – policy choices validated to the extent that they conform to external templates (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007). Historically, as earlier chapters note, such external anchoring has dovetailed with neo-colonial practices whereby political and technical instruments serve to maintain influence after formal independence (Siradag 2014; Goody 1982). The strategic test, then, is whether Burkina Faso can sequence stabilisation with transformation: institutionalising domestic financing (e.g. via national funds), phasing local value addition in mining and agriculture, and leveraging AES regional markets to gradually reduce exposure to programme finance – without precipitating macroeconomic slippage (AfDB 2024).

In this light, Burkina Faso's current stance appears theoretically radical but practically hybrid: delinking is advances in discourse and selective policies, while Bretton Woods frameworks continue to structure macroeconomic parameters. Progress toward material decolonisation will depend on embedding transparency, domestic revenue mobilisation, and counter-cyclical buffers that widen fiscal autonomy, alongside regional instruments capable of substituting for external backdrops. Absent such institutional deepening, the risk is a reconfigured dependency in which sovereignty claims to coexists with enduring tutelage through finance surveillance (AfDB 2024; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007; Siradag 2014; Goody 1982).

5.3 Social and cultural development under Captain Ibrahim Traore: Intentions to delink from the West and foster decolonisation

Historically, the social-cultural sphere in Burkina Faso has been an arena of colonial control and post-colonial contestation. Under Captain Ibrahim Traore, re-imagining Burkinabe identity has become a pillar of the broader decolonial project. Below, each theme is presented as intentions and how this links to the outcomes and impacts of these intentions, with explicit links to decoloniality and dependency theory.

5.3.1 Reviving identity through symbolic and institutional breaks

Under Captain Ibrahim Traore, the state has pursued visible symbolic and institutional ruptures with colonial inheritances as part of a broader project of cultural realignment. In 2023, Burkina Faso abolished colonial-era judicial wigs associated with British and French legal traditions, an intervention that re-situates the performance of justice within indigenous cultural signifiers rather than European aesthetics (iAfrica 2025). Read through a decolonial lens, the gesture exemplifies 'epistemic disobedience' – a refusal to accept Euro-American claims to neutral universality in defining institutional reform and meaning – and signals an intention to re-anchor authority in locally legible symbols and practices (Mignolo 2007).

A parallel move is the re-introduction of indigenous languages and more contextualised educational content, which together aim to reverse the long-standing dominance of French in schooling and public life (Africa News 2023; BTI 2024). This reorientation aligns with arguments that knowledge production in the post colony must confront the legacies of colonialism embedded in language, curricula, and epistemic authority. In this respect, the policy turn resonates with Ndolvu-Gatsheni's emphasis on decolonising power, being, and knowledge, with Mamdani's critique of the supposed neutrality of Western modernity in method and pedagogy, with Mbembe's call to provincialise dominant narratives that have historically marginalised African ways of knowing (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Mamdani 2014; Mbembe 2021).

Substantively, these shifts seek to reclaim identity at the institutional level – in courts, schools, and the civil service – so that cultural dignity is not merely symbolic but embedded in the everyday production of law and knowledge. Their long-term significance will turn on system-level implementation: teacher training, materials development, and budgetary support that ensure indigenous languages and locally grounded curricula become operative standards rather

than ceremonial markers (Africa News 2023; BTI 2024). In short, the reforms advance a decolonial project that privileges endogenous meanings and practices; their credibility will be measured by the extent to which institutional change consolidates these principles beyond symbolism (iAfrica 2025; Mignolo 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Mamdani 2021; Mbembe 2021).

5.3.2 Cultural Sovereignty And Resistance To Western Norms

The Traore administration has advanced cultural sovereignty as a constitutive element of political transformation. Promoting indigenous arts, festivals, and social rituals that were historically marginalised under colonial rule or subordinated to neoliberal cultural trends (Sithole and Tsholo 2023). In this framing, culture is not merely expressive be programmatic – a vehicle for reclaiming authorship over national narratives and for aggregating Pan-African solidarities now institutionalised through the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). Public ceremonies, military parades, and large-scale civic mobilisations have increasingly foregrounded shared Sahelian identity and the aspiration to recover epistemic and symbolic autonomy from Western tutelage (Hunter 2024). Read through a decolonial lens, these initiatives seek to reverse the coloniality of memory and meaning, repositioning indigenous repertoires as the legitimate grammar of public life and state legitimacy (Sithole and Tsholo 2023; Hunter 2024).

Yet dependency perspectives introduce a necessary caution. Cultural revival, absent system-level social policy, risks devolving into symbolic nationalism curated by elites rather than a people-centred reconstitution of social order. As N'Diaye (2024) notes, in the Malian context, cultural radicalism faltered when it failed to connect with class dynamics and the lived realities of ordinary citizens. By extension, for Burkina Faso, the durability of cultural sovereignty depends on investment in public services, support for grassroots mobilisation, and inclusive platforms that extend participation to women and youth (groups which are often underrepresented in decision-making and cultural governance) (N'Diaye 2024; Hunter 2024). In short, the present trajectory meaningfully contests Western cultural hierarchies; its credibility will hinge on whether cultural policy is coupled with distributive reforms that reinstate decolonial symbolism into material inclusion and thereby avoid reproducing dependency in a new, aesthetic register (Sithole and Tsholo 2023; Hunter 2024; N'Diaye 2024).

5.3.3 Gender, Youth, And The Limits Of Inclusive Decolonisation

While the Traore administration has foregrounded cultural revival and national cohesion, the distributional reach of these initiatives remains uneven across gender and generational lines. Evidence from UNHCR (2024) and the International Crisis Group (2023) indicates that structural inequalities continue to shape access to education, employment, and cultural production, with women and marginalised youth underrepresented in decision-making – both within state institutions and in the governance of cultural programmes (UNHCR 2024; International Crisis Group 2023). The escalating conflict ad displacement across the Sahel have further disrupted social cohesion, eroding the very communal infrastructure that inclusive cultural policies would require to gain traction (UNHCR 2024).

Read through a decolonial lens, the aspiration to reclaim epistemic and symbolic autonomy must be people-centres as substantiative decolonisation; without effective inclusion of women and youth in authorship of public culture and policy, the project risks reproducing hierarchy under new signifiers. From a dependency perspective, the persistence of humanitarian stress and household precarity generates a material constraint on participation: when livelihoods are insecure, cultural and civic engagement can be captured by elites or subordinated to security logics, yielding a symbolic nationalism that is not matched by social incorporation (UNHCR 2024; International Crisis Group 2023).

The implication is that cultural sovereignty requires system-level mechanisms – budgeted support for girls' and young women's education and employment pathways; youth access to training and cultural infrastructure; and participatory forums that embed women's and youths' representation in agenda setting – so that identity politics is backed by social policy rather than standing apart from it. in practice the credibility of Burkina Faso's cultural turn will be judged by whether these measure survive the pressures of insecurity and displacement, translating rhetoric into stable access, voice and institutional presence for those historically excluded (UNHCR 2024; International Crisis Group 2023).

5.3.4 Militarisation And Social Identity: A Decolonial Contradiction?

Under Captain Traore, the military has been elevated as a central symbol of national identity and sovereignty, with public narratives casting the armed forces as guardians of polity and exemplars of civic virtue (International Crisis Group 2023). This consolidation algins with regional patterns in which militaries have become highly politicised actors – both through their historical role in struggles for independence and via prolonged collaboration with external

security interventions – thereby accruing outsized legitimacy in political life (Wilen 2024; Turito 2023). Read through a decolonial lens, the sacralisation of military service appears to reclaim authority from Euro-American tutelage by locating security meanings in indigenous repertoires; yet the same move risks narrowing civic space if the idiom of sovereignty becomes synonymous with military primacy rather than people-centred governance. From a dependency perspective, the paradox deepens: efforts to delink for Western security architectures can generate internal dependencies on militarised solutions, especially where security is acute and civilian institutions lack resources or autonomy to offer alternative forms of protection and service delivery (International Crisis Group 2023; Wilen 2024; Turito 2023).

These tensions are amplified by the diffusion of self-defence logistics and the arming of civilians, which despite being framed as community protection, can erode social cohesion, blue the boundary between combatant and non-combatant , and entrench localised coercion (La Marge de Manouvre Etriote Des Partenaires Exteriures: Armer Les Civils Au Prix de la Cohesion Sociale? 2023). In such contexts, militarisation may operate as a symbolic shortcut to decolonial affirmation while reproducing hierarchy in practice: authority centralises, accountability things, and civic participation is filtered through security imperatives. The strategic test, therefore, is whether the state can re-balance security and citizenship – professionalising the armed forces under clear civilian oversight, constraining vigilante dynamics, and investing in social services and local governance – so that the pursuit of sovereignty does not culminate in a security-centric identity that contradicts the decolonial commitment to broadened agency and inclusive belonging.

5.4 Ideological change under Captain Ibrahim Traore: implications for delinking and decolonisation

Since 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traore has advanced an ideological pivot that rejects the liberal-democratic consensus associated with Western conditionality and re-centres sovereignty, self-reliance, and Pan-African solidarity. This section unpacks the shift through intentions and explains the possible outcomes while linking each theme to decoloniality and dependency theory.

5.4.1 The Re-Inscription Of Sovereignty As An Ideological Bedrock

Since 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traore has reframed sovereignty as the organising principle of statecraft, portraying foreign military presence and externally scripted governance models as

forms of subjugation to be dismantled (Lebovich 2024). Read through decolonial theory, this stance aligns with arguments that sovereignty must extend beyond territorial jurisdiction to encompass epistemic autonomy – freedom from Euro-Atlantic conditionalities and the authority to define security and development on endogenous terms (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007). The termination of defence arrangements with France and the United States, and the broader rejection of Western security tutelage, give this discourse institutional form and resonate with dependency critiques that identify aid and security cooperation as conduits through which core-periphery hierarchies are reproduced (Burkina Faso's coup and political situation 2022; Umar 2023). Yet, the move also generates a familiar tension, unless new partnerships are structured to avoid substitutional dependency, the ideological refresh risks exchanging one external pipeline for another. In this sense, the durability of the sovereignty turn depends on whether emergent alignments are matched by institutional safeguards that prevent re-externalisation of agenda-setting power and embed accountability to domestic priorities (Lebovich 2024; Ndlovu-Gatsehni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007; Burkina Faso's coup and political situation 2022; Umar 2022).

5.4.2 Revolutionary Nostalgia And The Revalorisation Of Sankarism

Traore's discourse and symbolic politics deliberately draw on Thomas Sankara's legacy – anti-imperialism, public integrity, popular mobilisation – elevating Sankara as a national referent through commemorations and the renaming of public spaces (Aliyu 2024; The Conversation 2025). From a decolonial perspective, this is not merely rhetorical. It engages the coloniality of memory by displacing colonial figures from the public sphere and re-centring indigenous historical agency; as Mbembe and Quijano argue, decolonisation must operate across power, being, and knowledge, including the narratives through which political community is imagined (Mbembe 2021; Quijano 2000). However, the analogy with Sankarism is not seamless. Sankara's project emphasised grass-roots democracy and collective empowerment (Sankara 1985), whereas Traore presides over a military-led order with constrained civic participation (Roger 2024). Dependency scholarship cautions that elites can co-opt radical idioms for regime consolidation, converting revolutionary symbolism into an instrument of authority absent corresponding democratising practices (McGowan and Smith 1978). The strategic test, therefore is whether Sankarist invocation is anchored in institutional reforms – so that historical memory translates into people-centred transformation rather than elite-curated legitimacy.

5.4.3 State-centrism, authoritarianism, and anti-liberalism

A further axis of ideological change is the overt critique of liberal-democratic templates as ill-suited to Sahelian realities. Traore advances an alternative premised on national traditions and security imperatives, casting sovereignty as resistance to imported institutional forms (The Conversation 2024). Read decolonially, this challenges the coloniality of democracy, the presumption that Western models are universal while African alternatives are by definition derivative or illegitimate (Simura 2024; Amoateng 2022). Yet the same move can enable state-centrism: the dissolution of elected bodies, suppression of opposition, and the narrowing of civil liberties seek cohesion through centralised control, risking a slide from decolonial autonomy into authoritarian consolidation. From a dependency standpoint, fragile institutions and limited economic sovereignty can make centralisation appears instrumentally necessary to manage crisis, but such concentration tends to reproduce hierarchy and external vulnerability rather than resolve them. The coherence of the anti-liberal turn will therefore be judged by whether it is transitional and purposive – sequenced with economic diversification, inclusive governance, and legal guarantees of civic space – or whether to settles into a security-centred permanence that contradicts that people-centres horizon of decoloniality (The Conversation 2024; Simura 2024; Amoateng 2022).

5.5 Discussion

5.5.1 Regional-Geopolitical Realignment

Since 2022, Burkina Faso – together with Mali and Niger – has pursued a deliberate reconfiguration of its external relations. The formation of the Alliance of Sahel Sates (AES via the Liptako-Gourma Charter in September 2023, articulates a Pan-African regionalism grounded in self-determination and sovereignty, coupled with a mutual defence orientation intended to replace externally driven security architectures (Prashad and Alexandra 2024; Mwangi 2025). This posture has been reinforced by exists from ECOWAS in January 2025 and other multilateral perceived as vehicles of external tutelage such as the OIF and G5 Sahel – and by proposals for an AES passport and an independent currency (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Aboagyre 2025; Klomegah 2025; Kulkarni 2025; Ross 2023; Mwangi 2025). Read through decoloniality, these moves re-centre endogenous co-ordination and symbolically repudiate Francafrique logics; read through dependency theory, their credibility depends on the alliance's capacity to operationalise defence and economic commitments and to mobilise

domestic resources and capital, lest sovereignty claims remain largely rhetorical (Amin 1972; Angotti 1981; Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Mwangi 2025).

A parallel stand is the rejection of western military presence: requested withdrawal of French troops and subsequent US drawdowns challenge long-standing counter-terror frameworks and the paternalistic asymmetries they sustained (Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Nzuki 2024; Brown 2024; Rukema 2023). This is intelligible as epistemic disobedience - a refusal to outsource the definition of security and its modalities – but also it raises the risk of re-routed dependency if new patron simple supplant old ones (Mignolo 2009). The Russian pivot illustrates this ambivalence: Moscow's toolkit – arms transfers, private military support and information operations – offers fewer overt conditionalities and a post-Western diplomatic space, yet empirical patterns of transactional, elite-driven exchanges and resource-for-security bargains risk reproducing extractive hierarchies under different auspices (Vuksanovic 2023; Gotz and Kaas 2024; Siegle 2021; Horak et al. 2024; Milon 2024). The widening of South-South cooperation with Turkey and China similarly expands rooms for manoeuvre – though defence and cultural diplomacy in Turkey's case, and infrastructure/telecoms finance in China's – while necessitating safeguards against neo-extractivism and over-concentration of primary commodities (Lebovich 2023; "Unravelling Turkish Involvement in the Sahel" 2023; Ramani 2024). Overall, the regional geo-political pivot evidences decolonial intent; its materialisation will hinge on institution-building, transparent contracts, and regional instruments that deliver public goods.

5.5.2 Political Economy: Sovereignty Claims And Structural Constraints.

Economically, the government has sought developmental autonomy through expanded public investment in infrastructure, energy, agriculture, and social protection – an envelope estimated at 11.2 percent of GDP by the end of 2023 (Klomegah 2025; "Burkina Faso Economic Update 2024 – Special Chapter Maintaining Reform Momentum on Social Assistance," 2024; PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT (PCR) FOR PUBLIC SECTOR OPERATIONS," n.d.; "Burkina Faso Economic Outlook | African Development Bank Group," n.d.). Domestically financed instruments such as the Fonds de soutien patriotique (FSP) – which reportedly mobilised over 86 billion CFA in its first eighteen months – underline an effort to delink materially by internalising financing of social and security functions (Mignolo 2009; "Patriotic Support Fund" 2024). Complementary measures include resource nationalism – nationalising gold refining and renegotiating mining contracts – to internalise value chains in gold, uranium, and lithium, alongside agro-financing via dedicated agribusiness bank under PACBA, and

AES-linked industrial aspirations (Klomegah 2025; Prashad and Alexandra 2023; Cascias 2025; Saidou 2023; AfDB 2024; Abogyre 2024).

Through a decolonial lens, these politics move beyond Eurocentric growth templates toward local capacity-building and structural transformation. Through a dependency lens, they must overcome familiar headwinds: elite-capture, state-led extractivism, and the reproduction of enclave economies – risks amplified where resource-for-security or resource-for-finance exchanges accompany new partnerships (Viegi 2016; Gotz and Kaas 2024). Moreover, Burkina Faso remains embedded in Bretton Woods frameworks – commitments to reduce the fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP by 2026, programme finance by the IMF, World Bank, an regional monetary disciplines (WAEMU) – and producing a hybrid political economy in which decolonial rhetoric coexists with external policy anchors (AfDB 2024; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Grosfoguel 2007). The strategic test is sequencing: institutionalising domestic revenue and counter-cyclical buffers while phasing local value addition in mining and agriculture and leveraging AES markets to reduce exposure to concessional pipelines without jeopardising macro-stability (AfDB 2024; "AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP BURKINA FASO INTERIM COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER (I-CSP) 2022-2025,").

5.5.3 Social-cultural reconfiguration

On the social-cultural plane, the government has combined symbolic and institutional shifts: abolishing colonial-era judicial wigs in 2023 and advancing the re-introduction of indigenous languages and contextualised curricula to reverse the dominance of French in law and education (iAfrica 2025; Africa News 2023; BTI 2024). These moves align with the decolonial triad of power, being, knowledge and seek to re-anchor authority in locally legible repertoires (Mignolo 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Mamdani 2021; Mbembe 2021). The administration has also promoted cultural sovereignty – indigenous arts, festivals, and Pan-African solidarity, now institutionally mediated through AES – as a grammar of public life that contests Western cultural hierarchies (Sithole and Tsholo 2023; Hunter 2024).

Yet inclusion remains uneven. Women and marginalised youth are underrepresented in decision making and cultural governance, and conflict-induced displacement has strained the social infrastructure needed for inclusive participation (International Crisis Group 2023; UNHCR 2024). Dependency perspectives stress that humanitarian precarity constrains civic engagement and exposes revival projects to elite curation and security logics. The credibility of cultural decolonisation will therefore turn of system-level-supports – teacher training, materials and

budget lines for indigenous-language education; targeted programmes for girls'/youth inclusion; and participatory forum that institutionalise representation – so that identity politics is backed by social policy (Africa. News 2023; BTI 2024; UNHCR 2024; International Crisis Group 2023). Finally, the elevation of the military as a central symbol of identity risks narrowing civic space and diffusing self-defence logics that undermine cohesion; professionalisation under civilian oversight and constraints on vigilante dynamics are critical to prevent a security-centric identity that contradicts people-centred decolonisation (International Crisis Group 2023; Wilen 2024; Turito 2023; La Marge de Manouvre… 2023).

5.5.4 Ideological reorientation and governance

Ideationally, the regime has re-inscribed sovereignty as its organising principle, repudiating externally scripted governance and terminating security arrangements with France and the United States (Lebovich 2024; "Burkina Faso's coup and political situation" 2022; Umar 2022). This aligns decolonially with claims to epistemic autonomy and, in dependency terms, with efforts to cut core-periphery conduits. The invocation of Sankarism – commemorates, toponymic changes, and a discourse of anti-imperial integrity – intervenes in the coloniality of memory and re-centres indigenous historical agency (Aliyu 2024; The Conversation 2025; Mbembe 2021; Quijano 2000; Sankara 1985). Nonetheless, tensions persist: Sankara's emphasis on grassroots democracy sits uneasy with a military-led order and constrained civic participation, and dependency scholarship cautions that radical idioms can be co-opted for regime consolidation absent democratising practice (Roger 2024; McGowan and Smith 1978). The overt critique of liberal-democratic templates as ill-suited to Sahelian realities may decolonially contest the presume universality of Western models, but it also risks state-centrism unless framed as a transitional strategy sequenced with economic diversification, inclusive governance, and legal guarantees of civic space (The Conversation 2024; Simura 2024; Amoateng 2022).

Synthesis. Across the four domains, intentions are clearly decolonial – asserting sovereignty, regional self-definition, value-chain internalisation, epistemic and cultural autonomy. Outcomes to date remain mixed: institutional breakthroughs such as AES formation; contract renegotiations; curricular shifts, coexist with capacity constraints, Bretton Woods anchoring, humanitarian stressors, and risks of reconfigured dependency through new external pipelines. Whether Burkina Faso's post-2022 coup trajectory realises material decolonisation will depend on implementation: operationalising AES commitments; entrenching transparent; value-adding economic governance; coupling culturally policy to distributive inclusive; and ensuring

ideological claims are checked by accountability and participation. Absent that conversion. The most likely equilibrium is a hybrid order – symbolic delinking alongside enduring structural dependence.

Chapter 6: Conclusion And Recommendations

This study set out to determine whether the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso – and the junta's initial declarations and early actions – can be read through a decolonial lens, whether the coup is indicative of a broader decolonial turn in the Sahel. The systematic review demonstrates, fist, a clear declaratory break with the Francafrique order – visible in the creation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), and coordinated exists from ECOWAS and other multilaterals, the termination of Western security footprints, and a turn to South-South partnerships. Second, it shows partial and uneven materialisation of these ambitions constrained by macro-financial anchoring to Bretton Woods frameworks, institutional capacity gaps, humanitarian pressures, and the risk that new external alignments replicate extractive hierarchies. In short, intentions are unmistakably decolonial; outcomes to date remain hybrid.

Geopolitically, the AES provides the institutional grammar of sovereignty and regional self-definition. Yet, consistent with dependency insights, symbolism will only harden into substance if collective commitments are operationalised. On the evidence reviews, the most credible path is to phase implementation around deliverables that directly alter everyday state-society and intra-regional exchanges. Concretely, AES should be sequenced through a resourced roll-out of mobility and payments instruments – beginning with a passport and interoperable settlement rails and only then advancing toward monetary arrangements – underpinned by transparent procurement, rules of origin that privilege local content, and interoperable infrastructure standards. Such design converts regionalism from a declaratory foil to Francafrique into a platform for material delinking, while minimising transition risk.

In the political economy domain, the government's portfolio – expanded public investment, the domestically financed Patriotic Support Fund, resource-nationalist measures in gold and other minerals, agrifood financing, and AES-linked industrial aspirations – points beyond Eurocentric growth templates toward capacity-building. To avoid a reconfigured dependency, however, sequencing is pivotal. Macro-stabilisation must be paired with structural transformation: domestic revenue mobilisation and counter-cyclical buffers should be channelled through regional value chains to internalise linkages rather than reproduce enclaves. South-South partner sips with Russian, Turkey, and China can widen policy space if conditioned ex-ante on transparency, local-content and technology-transfer previsions, and governance safeguards that limit elite capture and neo-extractivism. In this way, sovereignty claims move from discourse to balance sheet.

Socially and culturally, the abolition of colonial judicial symbols and the reintroduction of indigenous languages target the coloniality of knowledge, being and memory. Their durability will hinge on translating symbolism into system change: teacher training pipelines, curriculum development, materials budgets, and administrative guidance that make indigenous-language instruction operative standards rather than ceremonial markers. To align with a people-centred decolonial horizon, inclusion must be institutionalised. Expanding women's and youth representation in decision-making – through quota-anchored appointments, resourced youth skills programmes, and participatory forums – links identity politics to distributive outcomes and mitigates the risk of elite curation. In the security sphere, the elevation of the military as an identity anchor must be balanced by professionalisation under clear civilian oversight, constrained vigilante dynamics, clarified rules of engagement, and widened parliamentary and judicial scrutiny; otherwise a security-centric identity will narrow civic space and blunt decolonial gains.

Ideationally, the regime's re-inscription of sovereignty and revalorisation of Sankarism recuperate historical agency and legitimate a search for institutional forms no derivative of neo-liberal templates. The same literature warns, however, that revolutionary idioms can be appropriated for regime consolidation if no tethered to accountable practice. Accordingly, the normative arc of the present transition should be made explicitly transitional and purposive: timelines for resorting representative institutions, safeguard for civil liberties, and participatory oversight of flagship economic reforms would reconcile the sovereignty turn with a decolonial commitment to broadened agency.

Methodologically, the systematic review – reported with PRISMA as a transparency tool and guided by an explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria – underscores a consistent distinction between intentions and outcomes. On the former, there is convergence: Burkina Faso and its AES partners are deliberately seeking to delink from historically embedded Western dominance and to construct regional alternatives. On the latter, the record is mixed: institutional breakthroughs coexist with capacity constraints. Humanitarian stressors, and persistent financial dependence. The cumulative implication is not that the decolonial project is illusory, but that is its nascent and contingent.

In direct answer to the research questions: a) the junta's initial declarations and early actions are convincingly interpretable through a decolonial framework that foregrounds sovereignty, epistemic autonomy, and regional self-definition; and b) the coup is indicative of a decolonial

turn in the Sahel insofar as it catalyses regional coordination and policy experimentation aimed at delinking. Realising that run, however, requires embedding it in institutions: phased AES implementation; macro-structural sequencing that privileges domestic revenue, counter cyclical buffers, and local value addition; conditional South-South partnerships that transfer capabilities rather than merely re-route dependency; security sector professionalisation under civilian control; and social policy that funds indigenous language education and expands the inclusion of women and youth. Absent such conversion, the most probable equilibrium is hybrid order – symbolic delinking alongside enduring structural constraints. With it, Burkina Faso's post-2022 trajectory can move from declaratory sovereignty to material decolonisation.

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