AALBORG UNIVERSITY

The Declining Influence of France in the Sahel:
A Multimodal and Framing Discourse Analysis on Presidential Speeches in Burkina Faso

How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations?

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Abstract

This thesis delves into the evolving dynamics of Franco-Burkinabè relations in the context of the declining influence of France in the Sahel region. Focusing on Burkina Faso, a country once deemed among the most stable countries in the Sahel region, this thesis aims to look at How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations? *This thesis contributes to addressing a significant gap in the existing literature by providing nuanced insights into Burkinabè perspectives, showcasing the intricate narrative shifts and priorities within the Burkinabè government. It offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex post-colonial relationship between Burkina Faso and France. This thesis examines the shifting dynamics of Franco-Burkinabè relations within the context of France's declining influence in the Sahel region, focusing on Burkina Faso. Utilizing Framing and Multimodal Discourse Analysis through the lens of social constructivism and neo-colonialism, the research looks at New Year presidential speeches held all along the Barkhane military operation. The analysis reveals a notable transformation in Burkina Faso's relationship with France, evolving from early neo-colonial influences to an obvious desire for independence. Evidenced through changes in the Head of State's attire, rhetoric, and textual space dedicated to international partners, this shift is marked by issues such as Barkhane's governance, human rights concerns, and unmet promises. Resultantly, a palpable rise in anti-French sentiment has emerged, fuelled by perceived condescension and arrogance.*

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Introduction

Burkina Faso, once considered one of the most peaceful countries in the world, is going through a period of political, security and economic instability, particularly following the removal of President Blaise Compaoré in 2014 and the emergence of jihadist activity (Hilgers & Loada, 2013). This power vacuum has led to a growing instability, creating a conducive environment for insurgent groups, and turning Burkina Faso into a dynamic epicentre of jihadist activity (Elischer & Hoyle, 2023). The following deployment of the French army with the Serval and Barkhane operation in the 2010s aimed at tackling terrorist threats and stabilising the region, particularly in the context of collaboration with the G5 Sahel (Allizard, Cigolotti, & Carlotti, 2023). The various military and development aid programmes deployed have been widely criticised - especially for a lack of dialogue, outdated military strategy and human rights abuses (Goya, 2021; Oxfam France, 2022). All these challenges have generated strong anti-French sentiment, with variable intensities over the years. The recent rise of anti-French sentiment in some regions, notably in Francophone Africa and in former colonial countries, adds an interesting layer to the dynamic between Burkina Faso and France (Vircoulon, 2023).

The lack of research in the context of Burkina Faso lies in an insufficient examination of the relationship between France and Burkina Faso from a Burkinabè perspective, in a complex geopolitical context with security changes, particularly in the wake of the French military operation Barkhane. This gap limits an in-depth understanding of the post-colonial dynamic between Burkina Faso and France. Furthermore, from a broader African country perspective, there is a need for further studies that examine this evolving sentiment towards France, particularly in conflict-affected regions, where the French military is present, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationships of African nations towards their former colonial power.

This thesis aims to explore how Burkinabè leaders framed the change in their relationship with France in the context of the French military operation. The departure of the French army from Burkina Faso in 2023, after a significant presence, provides an opportunity to examine how leaders frame their positions in light of geopolitical changes, shifts in the security landscape, and the complex post-colonial relationship between the two nations. The aim is to provide nuanced insights into the feelings, perceptions, and political considerations shaping the ongoing narrative between Burkina Faso and France.

In order to examine this issue, this thesis will answer the following question:

How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations?

The main objectives of this thesis focus on the in-depth exploration and analysis of dynamic Franco-Burkinabè relations, as seen through the unique perspective of Burkina Faso. Examining the nature of anti-French sentiment present within former French colonies is a central element of this work, with particular emphasis on understanding how it is articulated and framed within various political discourses. Furthermore, this research is motivated by the persistent echoes of neo-colonialism that continue to resonate across the African continent, playing a key role in shaping contemporary perceptions and interactions. This thesis also aims to understand the changing relationship between France and Burkina Faso, from a historical period of French military and developmental support to the current situation characterised by strained diplomatic relations. To achieve this, this thesis uses an analysis of New Year presidential speeches from Burkina Faso. Choosing the New Year speeches as the primary source of investigation is strategic, allowing for an in-depth examination of how this significant shift in Franco-Burkinabè relations is articulated and communicated by the highest levels of authority in Burkina Faso. Ultimately, this research aims to illuminate the complex dimensions of the relationship between France and Burkina Faso, offering a nuanced understanding of the rhetoric surrounding it and the emergence of anti-French sentiments.

1   Theories and Theoretical Concepts

This section establishes the theoretical underpinnings that will serve as the foundation for addressing the problem formulation stated in the introduction. It will first define social constructivism, as the theoretical world viewpoint of this work, and will look at the way it frames power politics. It will be followed by a section defining neo-colonialism as a decolonial approach selected to understand the relations between Burkina Faso and France. It follows the arguments of Kwame Nkrumah (1965) in defining the theory and applying it to the case of Francophone Africa.

1.1   Social Constructivism

This is nowadays one of the most prominent schools of thought in the field of International Relations (Weber, 2013; Wilmer, 1998). It looks at the social context as an

influence on individual behaviour (Jung, 2019). According to social constructivism in the lens of International Relations, the State is an individual that has its own behaviour. It is a prerequisite that sets the state as a central actor in international relations (Wendt, 2004). Considered a "political anthropology of institutional change" (Hay, 2016, p. 531, l.47), it looks at the relationships and interactions between the social agents, shaped by a specific social context (Jung, 2019).

This theory is central to understanding how Burkina Faso has constructed their national identity and discourses while facing an international conflict with terrorists, as well as throughout their colonized background, with a continuous involvement with their former colonizer. Social constructivism will be applied in the analysis and in the discussion to understand how discourse can impact society.

1.1.1 Definition of social constructivism

Social constructivism is a theory that wishes to explain the evolution of the state's identities and interests throughout social construction, and, as the name suggests it, is a theory within constructivist theories (Wendt, 1992). As opposed to Realism and Liberalism, constructivist theories, including social constructivism, suggest that the reality of the world is made from social constructs, and thus it is constantly adapted and remodelled (Weber, 2013; Wendt, 1992).

Constructivism looks more in-depth into institutional behaviour since it argues that the institutions are shaping the state's ideology, values and way of thinking, both on behalf of the people and towards the international community (Hay, 2016). Indeed, institutions are composed of people, who together create a collective meaning, shaping state identity (Wendt, 1992; Hay, 2016). Moreover, we can see the influence of civil society on the institutions, by several means such as the use of public opinion, the economy, the delegation of power of the state towards some organisation of civil society, etc. This enlightens the role of society as well in influencing and shaping parts of the state's identity; therefore, they are influencing its understanding of the social act of an external actor, thus, writing a response accordingly (Jackson, 2009).

Thus, Social constructivism focuses of the construction of a state identity and of how a society is formed, as well as how power is established and socially constructed (Wilmer, 2018). Wendt (1992), who is considered one of the first social constructivist scholars, argues that the realist and liberalist approaches would see the state's identity as rationally structured (i.e., anarchy)

with its actions and behaviours being influenced by that said structure. Instead, he promotes the idea that the state, in its core identity and interests, is influenced by different internal and external processes, such as its institutions or relations with other states (Wendt, 1992). Hence, actors decide on actions which will modify the system in which the actors are acting. Those processes, i.e. the interactions and lessons learned, are constantly changing the structure and, therefore, the sovereignty of the state, the evolution of cooperation and the international collective identity that are constantly generated (Wendt, 1992, Hay, 2016, Kivimäki, 2016).

Consequently, by focusing more on constructivist theories within International Relations, scholars have introduced a wider range of key variables to the understanding and analysis of international relations dynamics (Weber, 2013; Wilmer, 1998; Shannon & Kowert, 2011, p. 12). By focusing on factors that are normative and subject to interpretation, rather than simply explanatory, constructivists have reinforced the need for explanatory approaches through the use of variables such as social and legal norms, the role of ideas, the foundation and evolution of individual and collective identity, social boundaries, civil society, the role of culture and historicity, and more recently the interpretation of emotions (Weber, 2013; Wilmer, 1998). These variables are then ranked according to their explanatory superiority to more traditional social sciences such as liberalism or realism (Weber, 2013).

1.1.2   Power politics in social constructivism
1.1.2.1   Interactions as enablers of power politics
Social constructivism is a valuable theory when it comes to explaining power politics and how states interact with each other. Wendt (1992) argues that "the meanings in terms of which action is organized arise out of interaction" (p.403, l.11-12). According to this logic, an action is an act led by a decision made by the state, which would have consequences at the domestic or international level. An interaction is the event in which two or more actors meet voluntarily or not (Wendt, 1992; Hay, 2016). Thus, Wendt (1992) argues that the decision-making process of a state is influenced by a specific event, planned or not. That interaction frames the behaviour of all the involved actors. At the international level, there is a protocol that frames the interactions between the states, in order to maintain a socially constructed international order. This behaviour is not framed but based on probabilities and variables, themselves based on the actions and decisions of the other actor (Hay, 2016). The interpretative and thought process of framing a response is called a "social act" (Wendt, 1992, l.23-24). This looks at the powerplays at stake and observes how states are navigating into Power Politics.

It means that if a state (State A) makes a move and starts acting, which could have consequences for another state (State B), A would therefore influence B to react if B is somewhat affected by A's action (Shannon & Kowert, 2011, p. 43-44). B would take into consideration its understanding of A's action according to its own values, experience and knowledge of A, as well as B's history and coping mechanisms. B would therefore react accordingly, which would then have consequences on A (Shannon & Kowert, 2011, p. 43-46). Since "[B] may make an attributional "error" in its inference about [A]'s intent, but there is also no reason for it to assume a priori – before the gesture – that [A] is threatening, since it is only through a process of signalling and interpretating that the costs and probabilities of being wrong can be determined" (Wendt, 1992, p. 405, l. 4-8). This continuous interaction will therefore create an extended knowledge of the actors involved and, therefore, will allow each actor to understand the power players and the behavioural consequences of their interactions at the global level, explaining the social construct of the international order (Kivimäki, 2016). Therefore, in this thesis, by looking at the action of State B (i.e. Burkina Faso), we can tend to understand its interests as well as its understanding and interpretation of the action of State A (i.e. France).

1.1.2.2 Social constructivism: making sense of Peace and Conflicts

As explained above, actions taken by states are socially constructed by their knowledge and interpretation of their interaction with other states. Therefore, "[s]ocial threats are constructed, not natural" (Wendt, 1992, p. 405, l. 8). A predator state, by its threatening behaviour, would generate accordingly a response by another state, either as a defence if the state is threatened, or as an answer by the international order navigating their knowledge of both states and the different variables (Wendt, 1992). Social constructivism offers a cognitive perspective in the understanding of conflicts and their resolutions. This makes it possible to hold the actors involved in conflicts accountable and understand the ins and outs leading to the creation and end of a conflict.

Following the social constructivist logic, both beliefs and interests are key to constructing a conflict. Hence, "constructivists argue that two […] conditions are necessary for constructing conflict: first, a particular kind of identity construction which plays on fear, threat, hatred, victimhood, and dehumanization of the 'other'; and second, the presence of elites committed to organizing the discursive and material instruments of war." (Jackson, 2009, p.178, l.12-15). Conflicts are therefore not only based on tangible problems but are closely linked to the specific form of identity construction in which different groups or individuals perceive themselves in

relation to each other (Jackson, 2009). These constructed identities, often rooted in negative emotions and perceptions, can contribute to the escalation of conflict. Moreover, elites influence the conflict construction process: conflicts are more likely to arise and escalate when influential individuals or groups (called 'elites') play a crucial role in shaping the conflict's narrative and mobilising the resources needed to participate in or sustain the conflict (Jackson, 2009). Thus, according to this logic, the construction of conflict involves not only tangible problems, but also the construction of identities rooted in negative emotions and perceptions, and the influence of elites on the conflict (Jackson, 2009).

Social constructivists furthermore argue that since a conflict is socially constructed, so is its resolution. In a very simplistic way, the resolution of a conflict depends exclusively on states creating a new reality or an international system that maintains universal peace (Kivimäki, 2016). Indeed, since conflicts are socially constructed and based on the social acts of two or more actors, the understanding and interpretation that lead to that conflict can be socially dis- and re-constructed to end that conflict, and/or the interests of a state can change due to one or many variables such as the well-being of the people, constructing a social act from an actor that would lead towards peacekeeping (Kivimäki, 2016).

1.2 Neo-colonialism

The decolonial theories look at a wide number of topics by focusing on the impact of European colonisation around the world, by linking the present world with the historical background that involved imperialism and colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965, p. ix-x; Langan, 2018). It enables an understanding of the historical context of a specific modern society and helps interpret the relationship between a former colony and its former colonizer. This thesis will not rely on post-colonialism since post-colonialism is looking at the socio-political consequences of colonialism in a former colonised state (Said & Nkrumah, 2017). Neo-colonialism, on the other hand, argues that there is a new form of colonialism/imperialism ongoing by the same or another great power towards a former colony (Nkrumah, 1965, p.xi-xx; Said & Nkrumah, 2017). It therefore looks at this new form of imperialism and at how a state can be oppressed by another entity. Additionally, neo-colonialism helps to provide a context to the analytical framework. Finally, neo-colonialism has primarily focused on Africa and Western neo-colonialism, becoming an often-used term by politicians in Africa, such as the President of the Transition of Burkina Faso, Ibrahim Traoré during his speech given at the second Russia-Afrique summit (Guiffard, 2023b; BF1 TELEVISION, 2023).

This theory will be applied in the analysis primarily to define the framework that will guide the analysis of the speeches, as well as to observe the visuals of the videos. Moreover, it will contribute to a discussion of the findings and assist in explaining the growth of the anti-French sentiment, since this theory provides a point of view of the neo-colonies instead of the neo-coloniser.

1.2.1 Definition of neo-colonialism

Neo-colonialism is a decolonial approach that has been developed since the 1960s, following the wave of independence for African countries. Kwame Nkrumah, who is considered one of the founders of this approach and the leader of Ghana's independence movement of 1957 (Langan, 2018), released "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism" in 1965, the first book theorising neo-colonialism. This approach grounds itself in neo-Marxism, with the clash between the rich and the poor applied to the international scale (Nkrumah, 1965, p.xvii; Langan, 2018; Aoki, 2022), and in Pan-Africanism that focuses on the liberation of Africa (Prashad, 2007, p.110-111; Langan, 2018, p.7). Hence, Aoki (2022) argues that "the enemy leadership is the contemporary […] capitalist class armed with a sophisticated intelligence apparatus" (p.99, l.13-15). Therefore, neo-colonialism is a theoretical concept that looks closely at the "North-South relations" (Langan, 2018, p. 3, l.36), meaning the interactions and dynamics between more economically developed countries (often located in the northern hemisphere) and less economically developed countries (often located in the southern hemisphere) (Langan, 2018), and looking at the domination of the Western countries on the "Third World" (Prashad, 2007, p.xv). Originally, neo-colonialists focused this concept on African countries and their relations with the former colonisers after their independence (Prashad, 2007, p.110-111; Langan, 2018).

Neo-colonialists argue that neo-colonialism is ontologically based on colonialism and imperialism. Indeed, they define neo-colonialism as the most current form of imperialism, replacing "[o]ld-fashioned colonialism" (Nkrumah, 1965, p.xi, l.6; Prashad, 2007, p.110-111); itself defined as the domination of a recognised independent country by another independent country (Nkrumah, 1965, p.xi, l.6; Prashad, 2007, p.10). By becoming independent, the former colony cannot be considered a colony anymore. However, it remains under the influence of external forces on different aspects of its sovereignty to an extent, making the former colony dependent on and dominated by outside powers in one or several aspects (Nkrumah, 1965).

This greater power is often the former imperialist, which could be influencing its former colony, but it can also be another greater power seeking to exert its power over new geographical areas of the world (Nkrumah, 1965). It can often be a nation-state, but also, as mentioned by neo-colonialists, a consortium or organisation based on financial agreements (Nkrumah, 1965). Nkrumah (1965) argues that "[t]he result of neo-colonialism is that foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of the less developed part of the world. Investment under neo-colonialism increases rather than decreases the gap between the rich and the poor countries of the world" (p.x, l.16-20). By investing in another country, through economic means, as well as military, the foreign investor expects something in return. Since the needs of the formerly colonised country are considerable due to the need for rapid development, and since its options for achieving it are limited, foreign investors can negotiate agreements in their favour and interests, instead of in the interest of the country in which they are investing in (Nkrumah, 1965, p.84-109; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). An unbalanced relationship is thus established, with an unstable dialogue due to a difference in weight and power in the discussions (Nkrumah, 1965; Aoki, 2022). Quite often, this compensatory package is financially appetising. Since the African continent has mineral-rich soil and valuable agricultural land, this compensation is often linked to the establishment of a mining or farming industry, enabling the investor to occupy a part of the land, to extract from the neo-colony's soil, such as oil, uranium, cotton, sugar, cocoa, etc., and use its labour force at a cheaper price (Prashad, 2007, p.176-190; Langan, 2018 p.6).

In addition, investors often add important prerequisites to their development aid programmes, which have consequences for the political and parliamentary agendas of states (Langan, 2014). This is seen as well through the creation of international organisations by the Global North, in which all countries are pushed to become members, such as the United Nations (Prashad, 2007, p.xvi). According to the logic of neo-colonialism, the neo-colonised state is therefore losing authority and free will over its own territory because of the binding agreements and the influence of the neo-colonialist authority. It threatens its capacity to govern and be sovereign (Nkrumah, 1965, p.xi; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). Indeed, "[f]or those who practice [neo-colonialism], it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress" (Nkrumah, 1965, p.xi, l.30-33). Thus, the neo-colonies are deprived of the advantages of old-fashioned colonialism, namely the political stability provided by the coloniser, and the responsibility of said coloniser towards its population when it comes to the action lead in the colony.

Neo-colonialist scholars assessed that neo-colonialism takes place in several areas, both economically and politically, but also culturally, and religiously (Nkrumah, 1965; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). It can take the form of aid for development, terms mostly used to implement various projects Western-shaped and not always in collaboration with the local population (Langan, 2014). Those programs are seen as "modern attempts to perpetuate colonialism while at the same time talking about 'freedom', which has come to be known as neo-colonialism." (Nkrumah, 1965; p.239, l.15-17). Indeed, these programmes promote Western values linked to human rights and the freedom of all individuals (Langan, 2014). Neo-colonialists denounce this liberalist thinking and do not see these development aid programmes as altruistic support from the great powers, but as a scheme whereby the beneficiary country would become indebted to them somehow (Nkrumah, 1965; Langan, 2014; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). Moreover, development aid programs, when implemented, can lead to premature economic liberalisation and the opening of trade, by fuelling and liberalising corruption, and thus not benefiting the local population (Langan, 2014; Langan, 2018, p.61-88).

From an economic angle, the methods used by neo-colonialist powers to maintain their influence over a country considered to be a neo-colony, include the various liberal international economic tools that generate and reinforce the debt of poor countries (Nkrumah, 1965, p.239-254; Prashad, 2007, p.14-15; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). These involve the trade systems resulting from the opening of international markets, now exacerbated by the globalisation of markets and competition on an international scale in every economic sector (Prashad, 2007, p.14-15/p.276-281; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). When it comes to neo-colonial methods of influencing the politics and governance of nations, this encompasses the maintenance of power and agreements established during the colonial era, such as maintaining military bases or industries in the region (Bayart & Ellis, 2000).

Another angle would be the close relationship between the governments of the former colonies and their former settlers. The former settlers therefore have a window of opportunity to exert their political influence (Langan, 2018; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). These decisions have a direct impact on the sovereignty of countries over their own territory (Nkrumah, 1965, p.239-254). The cultural neo-colonial method is based on the implementation and monopoly of Western cultural industries in the entertainment market. Industries such as Hollywood can share and promote their products with a Western vision and values (Nkrumah, 1965, p.246; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). It is possible to extend this method to the press, universities and schools, and literature, being elements influenced by the former colonists (Aoki, 2022; Bayart & Ellis,

2000). Regarding the religious aspect, neo-colonialists argue that the colonists brought evangelism to the African continent and continued to spread it (Nkrumah, 1965, p.247), which is representative of the development of the three monotheist religions: Christianism and Judaism from Europe and Islam from Asia (Bayart & Ellis, 2000).

As seen here and all along this section, the Neo-coloniser has a deep influence within the sovereignty and the institutions and/or civil society of the Neo-colony. According to the logic of social constructivists, the sovereignty of a state is socially constructed by both the state itself, but also by the external actors that would recognise or deny the state as sovereign (Bayart & Ellis, 2000). Hence, the neo-coloniser influences the sovereignty of the neo-colony (Nkrumah, 1965; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). This consequently influences its identity and, thus, the social act of the colony, which generates the actions of the colony (Bayart & Ellis, 2000).

1.2.2 Nkrumah and the example of Francophone Africa

In his book, K. Nkrumah (1965) examines and analyses the example of the Federations of West and Equatorial Africa, the countries that have been colonised by France. The author observes a Balkanisation of the region by the French Government while facing the independence wave from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, due to the Law n. 56-619 of 23 June 1956, called Loi-Cadre Defferre (République Française, 1956). This law aimed to reform the status and institutions of the French overseas territories, by concerting the interest of the population in remaining under the French laws and institutions (Nkrumah, 1965, p.16-17). They were entitled to choose whether they wished to remain completely, partially, or not within the French Nation.

Concerning the West African countries, only Guinea has required full independence by voting against the French constitution, while the other countries have voted to become autonomous republics remaining members of Francophone Africa (Nkrumah, 1965, p.16). Thus, it allowed France to retain its influence in the countries by law since they would remain under the French territories (Nkrumah, 1965, p.16-17). Nkrumah (1965) suggests that this decision was partly taken to avoid a similar situation to Guinea, meaning the complete and immediate withdrawal of France. This withdrawal would have been intended to dissuade other West African states from leaving the French Community (Nkrumanh, 1965, p.17). Nevertheless, a few years later, these autonomous republics decided one after the other to become independent. In order to maintain its position of influence at the international level, France offered to set up a fund to assist the development of these countries (Nkrumah, 1965, p.17-19).

Nkrumah (1965) argues that the countries had no choice but to accept this proposal. By maintaining an influence in its former colonies through this aid, France has established a range of trade agreements specifically for its industries, both for the import and installation of French companies and for the extraction and purchase of raw materials, allowing France to maintain a strong diplomatic presence (Nkrumah, 1965, p.52-68; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). Some agreements were based on exclusivity and fixed prices for goods exported to European countries, making these industries uncompetitive (Nkrumah, 1965, p.52-68). Moreover, by maintaining the CFA Franc as the currency in most of these countries, France has ensured that it retains monetary influence in the banking systems of these countries (Nkrumah, 1965, p.226; Bayart & Ellis, 2000).

Towards the end of his book, Nkrumah (1965) presents different methods to counteract neo-colonialism, since the author argues that neo-colonialism "testifies to [the imperialist states'] inability to rule any longer by old methods" (p. 253, l. 11-12). Thus, neo-colonialists defend that the neo-colonial and neo-imperial solution to develop a 'third world' state is factually not sustainable in the long term because it is unable to integrate local populations as a whole economically nor institutionally, leaving them on the side deprived of basic rights such as education (Bayart & Ellis, 2000; Prashad, 2007, p.276-281). Therefore, Nkrumah's (1965) first action to 'destroy' neo-colonialism is to create unity between the states against the rule of neo-colonialist forces. As explained earlier in this section, an important method in maintaining influence and sovereignty has been to divide regions and countries in order to get a larger influence. Unity is therefore seen as the natural and 'obvious' way to get back this sovereignty (Nkrumah, 1965, p.253-254). This unity should be intercontinental, bringing together Asian, African and Latin American states against the Western forces (Nkrumah, 1965). Additionally, neo-colonialists sustain the argument that unified nations should work against the liberalist international system and towards socialist politics, to get independence from the former coloniser, thus liberation (Nkrumah, 1965, p.253-254; Prashad, 2007, p.276-281). Hence, to enable and reach these ambitious objectives, each and every non-western state should strengthen their sovereignty and their position at the international level to become fully independent and sufficient, without the need of a greater nation, risking abuses (Nkrumah, 1965, p.255-259; Bayart & Ellis, 2000).

Neo-colonialism has been criticised as a theoretical concept due to its association with Marxist ideologies that are considered to be outdated and violent. Moreover, it portrays African states

as passive victims, and is used as a polemical tool by some African elites who disproportionately blame Western countries for governance failures (Langan, 2018, p.4).

2   Methodology

The following chapter will lay out how this paper aims to answer the research question: *How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations?* Section 2.1. will detail the chosen empirical data to be analysed: New Year Presidential Speeches. Then, section 2.2. will present two analytical concepts, in which the analysis of the data can be done in the context of neo-colonialism. In order to look at the Burkinabè social constructs that shifted from the appreciation of France to a strong anti-French feeling, section 2.2.1. will introduce the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offered by Fairclough (1985). Section 2.2.2. will define and explain Framing as a concept, a type of CDA that analyses linguistic documents through frames (Goffman, 1974). It will be followed by section 2.2.3. on Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA), a concept within CDA that allows the understanding of non-linguistic documents through a theoretical analysis (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021). It will provide a definition of the term, before looking at the MMDA approach to politics and its framework analysis of visuals. Section 2.3. will then develop an analytical framework, aiming to outline how the analytical concepts will be combined to analyse the case study and pertinent data to answer the research question. It will be followed by section 2.4. which presents the analysis strategy. Finally, section 2.5. aims to look at limitations that might bias this study and how these limitations were considered while writing this thesis.

2.1   Analytical Framework: Presidential Speeches

2.1.1   Presidential Speeches as an empirical data

The focus of this paper is Burkina Faso and its relation to France. To answer the research question, this thesis will measure the shift in the perception of France by Burkina Faso by looking at the rhetoric employed by the Burkinabè government. It, thus, draws on social constructivism to examine how the nation represents the country and, therefore, a speech from an official institution of a country represents the point of view of that country (Shannon & Kowert, 2011, p. 43). Indeed, constructivist research has been focussing on the role and construction of identity, language and discourses. According to this theory, "beliefs become actions through the medium of language" (Shannon & Kowert, 2011, p. 43, l.4-5), meaning

that words are actions in themselves, based on beliefs and values, thus, political speeches are sufficient data to get indications about power relations.

Based on a qualitative analysis of speeches, this thesis understands the state of Burkina Faso as a former colony and a Sahelian country and its relation to France, since 2015, at the beginning of Barkhane, the military coalition led by France in the counter-terrorism strategy. From presidential speeches held from New Year 2015 to New Year 2023, this thesis aims to analyse the development of the relations between France and its former colony and to track a rhetorical pattern for Burkina Faso.

First and foremost, it is essential to define the nature of presidential speeches. A political speech is defined as a communication based on a discourse, given by a politician or a parliamentary, thus by someone representing the government or its political opposition (Van Djick, 1997). Therefore, presidential speeches follow the layout of political communication, but generate a wider impact on the public and public opinion since the speaker is not just another politician but a head of state (Van Djick, 1997; Grimaldi; 2023).

As explained above, presidential speeches aim to either reassure and support the public it addresses, influence policymaking or construct social identity with verbal and non-verbal manners (Mansouri Nejad et al., 2013; Azpíroz, 2013; Grimaldi, 2023). Indeed, "Political speeches, as the right exemplifications of language abuse, are used to accomplish the intended gains." (Mansouri Nejad et al., 2013, p.169). One very specific type of presidential discourse is the annual presidential address to the nation given for New Year, as is tradition in many nations around the globe (Grimaldi, 2023). A New Year's presidential speech is made to reflect on the past year and to open a new one (Grimaldi, 2023). It needs to be analytical, to reflect the major events that arise that year, and to set an agenda for the new time period. It is made to address the public and is often written with an understanding of public opinion, therefore is supposed to reflect reality (Grimaldi, 2023). Hence, because of its regular setting, it is one of the most watched and expected presidential speeches in political life in many nations (Grimaldi, 2023).

Moreover, that type of speech is used at a specific recurrence, on the last day before a new year starts (Grimaldi, 2023). This means that the data can be obtained at regular intervals and over a period of time, which allows this thesis to study how the speeches reflect the developments in a country's political, economic, and societal context, in this case, Burkina Faso and its relation to France. Additionally, due to its delivery setting, both the speech in itself and the

visuals of the video are essential to witness the development in the governing powers, between a president to another.

Finally, observing the governing system's speeches throughout a certain time period, allows us to observe the political changes in the governance of the country by looking at the rhetoric behind it, revealing the formality and background of the governing body.

2.1.2 Choice of data

The different speeches analysed have been held from the New Year 2015 to the New Year 2023, as shown in Figure 1. Each speech contains two sources: the source with the written transmission and the source concerning the filmed speech held on television. Those speeches have been extracted from both national media and governmental websites, depending on the availability of the document.

Figure 1: Matrix of the speeches.

Year	President	Context of the speech	References
2015	Michel Kafando	First and only New Year speech for Government of the Transition after the coup against Compaoré held in 2014.	Rédaction B24, 2014; RTB, 2015
2016	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	First New Year Speech for the newly elected Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	laborpresse.net, 2016; rtb.bf, 2015
2017	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	This speech comes after the first terrorist attacks in Ouagadougou which marks a turning point in Kaboré's first term in office.	Présidence du Faso, 2016; rtb.bf, 2017a
2018	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	This speech comes only three days after the proposal for a new Constitution to establish the Fifth Republic.	Présidence du Faso, 2017; rtb.bf, 2017b
2019	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	This speech marks the start of 2019, during which Burkina Faso will lead the G5 Sahel	rtb.bf, 2018b; rtb.bf, 2018a
2020	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	This speech is an opening for the last year of the first turn of President Kaboré.	Présidence du Faso, 2019; rtb.bf, 2019
2021	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	This speech opens the first year of Kaboré's second turn in office, as well as the beginning of the health crisis due to the global pandemic of Covid-19.	Présidence du Faso, 2020; rtb.bf, 2020
2022	Roch Marc Christian Kaboré	2021 was a tough year in terms of health and security, this speech shows how the government reflects on it and projects an agenda. This speech took place a few days before the first coup d'état of 2022	Présidence du Faso, 2021; RTB, 2021
2023	Ibrahim Traoré	This speech is the first New Year speech held after the two coup d'états that happened in 2022, which	Présidence du Faso, 2022; rtb.bf, 2022

These speeches will be categorised according to the knowledge developed in the background section, as follows:

-   The speeches of the new year 2015 and 2016 will be analysed together since this period is considered pre-terrorist, as indicated in the third chapter, the country was not yet affected by the terrorist threat. In fact, the threat did affect the country in 2016 with an attack in the centre of Ouagadougou. Thus, those speeches represent the *status quo*.

-   The New Year discourses from 2017 to 2020 will be analysed under the same category because the country had the same parameters of life: the same government and the war spreading. This will make it possible to analyse these speeches from a similar angle and observe the changes in rhetoric during this period of defence.

-   The speeches of 2021 and 2022, reflecting the start of the second term of Kaboré as President in a more complex era due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, will be analysed together to understand the role of the pandemic in altering the New Year's speeches.

-   The New Year's speech for 2023 will be analysed on its own, as 2022 was a very dynamic year in terms of domestic and international politics, with the two different coups d'états that happened and Burkina Faso's request for the withdrawal of French soldiers.

2.2 Discourse Analysis

This thesis analyses political speeches, therefore, by using critical discourse analysis offered by Goffman (1974), Entman (1993), and Kress & Van Leeuwen (2021) as an analytical framework drawn from Hallahan (1999), it enables us to look at power, thus, at political strategies and the structural changes of actors involved (Gee & Handford, 2012). Indeed, Umar Bello (2019) analyses coup speeches that occurred in Nigeria and uses a combination of methods developed by Fairclough to look at the motivations, ideologies, and arguments that justify the coup (Bello, 2019). Moreover, Munawar (2018) investigated the political speech given on January 30th, 2018, at the White House by President Donald Trump. It focuses on how this speech is used as a power speech by highlighting the ideologies of his politics (Munawar, 2018). Discourse analysis has then provided an explanation, of how President Trump uses this speech to attempt to maintain his power, and such by using strong linguistics tools in a specific context of power relations (Munawar, 2018). Furthermore, this analytical concept has been used to understand the military involvement of France in the Sahel, more specifically in Mali (Erforth, 2020). By analysing a wide selection of official statements, this research paper has shown that France's determination in favour of a multilateralist political

approach is real, although politicians occasionally rely on unilateral action with key international support if rapid military intervention is judged to be required (Erforth, 2020).

2.2.1 Definition of Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a research method used to analyse written or spoken discourses by studying the language, the rhetoric, and the communication mechanisms of certain information. Normal L. Fairclough (1985), considered one of the founders and pioneers to define this method, differentiates the "'critical' and 'descriptive' goals of discourse analysis" (p.739, l. 19) by putting an emphasis on the benefits of a critical method: to contextualise and establish the interpretation of discourse. It is about analysing the factors that determine the discourse and the consequences of the discourse on the audience and not only defining the words of the discourse (descriptive) (Fairclough, 1985). A critical approach looks at "'micro' events […] and 'macro' structures" (Fairclough, 1985, p.739, l.24-25), and the relations between them. It enables the interpretation of discourses in a more global context, including the background and socially constructed norms that influence both the author and the audience (Fairclough, 1985). Discourse analysis looks more in-depth at language, linguistics, and rhetoric since the interpretation and meaning are consequences of language.

Scholars consider institutions to be "an intermediate level of social structuring" (Fairclough, 1985, p.748, l. 2-3). It both influences and is influenced by social actions and enables the construction of social identity. By looking at the institutions and applying a CDA framework, it enables the understanding of all layers of the society's identity and actions. Understanding institutions is essential to understanding the social priorities and their framing in the discourses (Fairclough, 1985). To an extent, it aims to show how power is translated into languages and speeches.

As described in the following section, Frame analysis is an integral component of CDA (Goffman, 1974). It involves examining the frames within the chosen discourse, as discourses primarily consist of frames, myths, narratives, metaphors, stereotypes, and similar elements (Goffman, 1974). Another type of CDA would be Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA), which enables the study of non-linguistic supports such as videos, music, images, etc. (Van Leeuwen, 2014). To dissect the symbolic meanings in the discourse, it is essential to scrutinize these identified components. Both Framing Analysis and MMDA will be combined to analyse political discourses in their globality.

2.2.2 Framing Analysis of Discourses

Framing Discourse Analysis allows an analysis of political communication based on the frames socially constructed. It allows to take into consideration the background and context as part of the meaning of the discourse (Goffman, 1974). Even if the Framing method has been mostly developed for the analysis of the media, it can be equally applied to televised presidential speeches (Hallahan, 1999). This analytical concept puts context in the centre of meaning, including the actions of France that would explain the response/social act of Burkina Faso and therefore the potential reaction of France, as argued by the social constructivists. Likewise, it allows to take into consideration the neo-colonialist context of the situation.

Frames will be based on neo-colonialism, more exactly on the four aspects in which we can identify it: economics, politics, culture, and religion. Since "[t]exts can make bits of information more salient by placement or repetition, or by associating them with culturally familiar symbols." (Entman, 1993, p.53, l.15-16), those frames will enable the analysis to look more deeply into the influence of and the rhetoric towards France and its neo-colonialist approach to Burkina Faso.

2.2.2.1 Definition of Framing Analysis

Framing is a set of primary social frameworks, as presented by Goffman (1974), that enables studying and understanding both communication and behaviour patterns from a wide number of disciplines (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999). This concept has applications in fields as diverse as psychology, verbal communication, decision-making, economics, media studies and political communication (Hallahan, 1999). Scholars, who have developed Framing Analysis, argue that one is experiencing life and emotions through the frames they construct individually. Frames, even if they are experienced individually, depend on the background of the individuals. It can be assumed that a group of individuals from the same region and social class have experienced similar events and have therefore constructed similar analytical frames (Hallahan, 1999). Therefore, Framing serves as an essential conceptual framework for deciphering how information is presented, perceived, and interpreted, while its influence extends far beyond disciplinary boundaries, making a significant contribution to our understanding of human communication (Goffman, 1974; Hallahan, 1999). It is a rhetorical approach that focuses on how messages are constructed, looking at the psychological processes that individuals use to understand, and apply information to create their reality (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999). It offers a deep insight into how individuals process information and interact with their environment,

which is essential for understanding communication and human cognitive functioning (Goffman, 1974; Hallahan, 1999).

"[P]ublic relations work fundamentally involves the construction of social reality" (Hallahan, 1999, p.209, l.18-19). Indeed, framing is an essential activity in the construction of social reality because it helps to understand the perspectives from which individuals perceive the world (Hallahan, 1999; Azpíroz, 2013). It is a concrete demonstration of constructivism in action, showing how conceptual frameworks and narratives shape our understanding of reality (Goffman, 1974; Hallahan, 1999). By influencing the way people interpret and make sense of information, framing demonstrates the ability of individuals to actively construct their own social reality, illustrating the fundamental role of subjective perception in shaping collective understanding (Goffman, 1974; Hallahan, 1999; Azpíroz, 2013).

Framing is the intentional act of selecting specific elements of a perceived reality and highlighting them in communication (Entman, 1993). It aims to influence the way in which the audience perceives and understands the subject in question. It involves defining a problem by presenting it from a particular angle, suggesting cause-and-effect relationships to influence interpretation, making moral judgements, and even recommending specific actions or solutions (Entman, 1993). Framing is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and discourse, as it allows communicators to strategically shape the way information is presented in order to promote the narratives and perspectives they want (Entman, 1993).

Entman (1993) explains the usefulness of the frames:

"Frames […] *define problems* – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes* – identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments* – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies* – offer and justify treatments for the problems and [predict] their likely effects" (Entman, 1993, p.52, l.24-29).

Frameworks are tools that help to define, analyse, and communicate about social problems and issues. First, they define problems by specifying, what is considered to be an issue in a given situation. This makes it possible to find underlying problems the author might want to address more obviously or subtly, which is most often only obvious in the context of cultural values and norms (Entman, 1993; Azpíroz, 2013). Second, frames help to determine what a causal agent does, by assessing the costs and benefits of its actions, usually in terms of shared cultural

values and norms (Azpiroz, 2013). By understanding the causes that have influenced the discourse, and by contextualising the document, frames help to shape the audience's understanding of it (Entman, 1993).

Frames also play an essential role in diagnosing the underlying causes of a problem and identifying the forces that contribute to it (Azpíroz, 2013). In addition, they make moral judgements by assessing the actions of causal agents in the light of societal values, thereby enabling the audience's culture and moral values to be considered (Azpíroz, 2013). Finally, executives propose solutions and remedies to resolve problems, while justifying these recommendations and predicting their likely effects. Overall, frameworks are fundamental elements that influence how individuals and societies understand and respond to complex societal problems. Frames can be found in multiple textual documents, such as media, advertising, official statements, literature, etc. (Hallahan, 1999).

2.2.2.2 Frames and Politics

Political actors are constantly using framing in political communication to prioritise and interpret reality by referring to shared symbols, culture and ideas, which contributes to an effective and convincing communication with the public (Azpíroz, 2013). Framing political communications, such as presidential discourses, enables one to define and assess the different reactions of the audience by looking at and analysing specific elements of the discourse. It examines more deeply the power structures and the actors' interests within a specific context. It therefore defines political actions and means through historical contexts that would be associated by the audience (Entman, 1993; Azpíroz, 2013). This enables the understanding of the public opinion associated with the discourse.

As explained above, frames are strongly affecting the understanding of a document. It is essential to carefully consider the frames of a document since frames would affect the meaning of communication in different manners (Entman, 1993). It is especially relevant when it comes to political communications since the consequences at stake could involve the domestic politics of a state and therefore the identity of that state. For instance, the use of certain frameworks by politicians in their communications has consequences for the public's understanding of and support for the discourse (Azpíroz, 2013). A political speech, media articles, social media post, or other political communications convey values and objectives that may or may not resonate with the public (Hallahan, 1999). By carefully selecting their frames, politicians are able to reach a part of the audience by using elements that value and contextualise the needs of the

audience. This can have important consequences in creating the collective meaning of institutions, particularly by influencing voting behaviour (Hallahan, 1999; Azpíroz, 2013).

2.2.3 Multimodal Discourse analysis

In this thesis, the aspect of this theory will be used to examine images and the meaning behind them. More specifically, this theory will enable this thesis to look at the composition of the video in which the Presidents have performed their New Year speech. By doing so, it will enable a second reading of the meaning of the speech, since, as previously assessed, the image and the video are as political as the speech itself (Jewitt, 2014). As mentioned by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2021), each element represents its own history and meaning, revealing the culture and values that the author wishes to share (p.20). Furthermore, this analytical concept enables a visual analysis. Indeed, a few of the Burkinabè New Year speeches have been released in the written press. New Year Speeches are always retransmitted on TV. Observing the evolution of these speeches comes also by looking at the scenery of these speeches, which reflects a historical and cultural context, influenced or not by neo-colonialism.

2.2.3.1 Definition of Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MMDA) is a multidisciplinary approach that has been developed by various scholars, adding a new aspect and discipline to CDA. MMDA argues that discourse can also come through non-linguistic supports such as visuals, sounds, body language, etc. (Jewitt, 2014). It is influenced by the work of former scholars on Discourse analysis such as Fairclough, enlarging the scope of documents that could be analysed and seeing the semiotics of communication as a central element of the transmission of a message (Jewitt, 2014; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.20). The use of MMDA is also a societal and historical necessity, since society has evolved, and its communication media with it (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 40). Today, the visual is a central approach to communication channels, starting with TV, with a drastic rise since the widespread use of ads and, above all since the emergence of social media.

Kress (2012), considered one of the main scholars who have developed MMDA, explains it by saying that "the aim of MMDA is to elaborate tools that can provide insight into the relation of the meanings of a community and its semiotic manifestations. […] A multimodal approach assumes that language, whether as speech or as writing, is one means among many available for representation and for making meaning. That assumes that the meanings revealed by forms of DA relying on an analysis of writing or speech are only ever 'partial' meanings. The meanings of the maker of a text as a whole reside in the meanings made jointly by all the modes

in a text" (p.37, l.6-13). The key idea of MMDA is that meaning is often conveyed through the interaction of modes and their associated semiotic resources (Kress, 2012). Modes are the different means or forms of communication that can be used to deliver meaning (Jewitt, 2014; Kress, 2012).

Semiotic resources, or codes (Van Leeuwen, 2014), on the other hand, are the elements or specific symbols of each mode responsible for conveying the meaning of the message (Jewitt, 2014; Kress, 2012). Analysing multimodal texts involves examining how these modes work together to create elaborate, nuanced, and layered meanings. Scholars study how the different modes interact, how they contribute to the overall message and how they are influenced by cultural, social and contextual factors (Jewitt, 2014). This approach is particularly useful when studying texts that rely on multiple forms of expression, such as advertisements, political speeches, films and multimedia presentations (Jewitt, 2014).

When it comes to visuals, scholars argue that images complement languages, which is true the other way around. A linguistic discourse, if analysed alone, is missing out on a part of its understanding. It is essential to take the visuals into account to contextualise the meaning. Equally, visuals and non-linguistic documents must be analysed with language, otherwise, the analysis would gather too many potential meanings, without being able to narrow it down to only one (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 20).

2.2.3.2 MMDA and politics

The scholars behind Multimodal Discourse Analysis assume that politics does not necessarily depend on politicians and parliamentarians nor on words. They argue that it can be found in and influenced by other formats and actors such as music, films, civil society organisations, social networks, etc. Those other types of content can have a political dimension that is influenced by and/or influences politics (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016). Indeed, some scholars argue that state institutions have been in decline since the 1970s. Therefore, politics, and the system by which the state influences the economy and the market, have changed and shifted towards neo-liberalism (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016). Consequently, the state's central role has been reduced and various functions have been outsourced to local authorities or non-state actors, such as private sector companies, but also through public-private partnerships (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016). If the role of the state is diminished by the privatisation of some of its functions, it is relevant to consider elements outside the state in the analysis of state documents, as well as to look at shifts in the people at the head of the state.

This suggests that some parliamentarians and members of government come from non-governmental bodies. It would be interesting to witness this influence, in both political linguistic and non-linguistic documents (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016).

2.2.3.3 MMDA and the Visual mode

According to MMDA, "the meaning expressed by [individuals from] all kinds of social settings are first and foremost social meaning" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.41, l.10-13). This perspective stresses the value of the diversity of individuals in the meaning-making process, thereby shaping reality as we perceive it. A remarkable aspect of MMDA is its ability to highlight the divergence of social perspectives from non-homogeneous societies, which manifests itself in the different ways in which texts and messages are constructed.

Unlike traditional linguistic approaches, which focus on syntactical, semantic, or pragmatic aspects of textual analysis, MMDA explores the vast and complex world of visual communication (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.149-178). It detects modality within visual content, serving as an essential vector for conveying social meanings. Modality, in this context, is based on the importance given to specific components as opposed to others in a given image. It examines how objects are represented and the intensity with which they are depicted. The visual mode employs 'realism' as a means to represent truth. Realism, in this context, assesses the extent to which an image reflects reality (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.149-178). For paintings or drawings, this depends on the level of detail and precision with which the subject is portrayed. In the case of photographs, it assesses how close the scenery is to reality and the degree of authenticity in the representation of the situation. By exploring these dimensions, MMDA offers a comprehensive framework for understanding every mode and social meaning transmitted through these documents, broadening one's understanding of the complex interplay between visual communication and social perception (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.149-178).

As explained earlier, resources or codes are considered as rules or lenses which individuals are using to analyse the visuals they are seeing (Van Leeuwen, 2014; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164). There are four types of coding orientation to structure the analysis of elements present in a picture. The analysis would assess the validity of the visual thanks to the use of specific codes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164). Depending on the document, if it is a modern artwork from a gallery, or if it is a journalistic picture, the coding used to understand the meaning of the document according to its context is different (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021,

p.82). The different types of coding are technical coding orientation, sensory coding orientation, abstract coding orientation, and naturalistic coding orientation (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164).

The technological coding orientation evaluates visual representations considering their practical value as a framework; hence, these elements must serve a purpose in the image and its comprehension or aesthetics to be considered valid. This means that if a visual element does not serve the image in its communication of a message, its validity will be considered limited in this context. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164). On the other hand, the orientation of sensory coding is grounded in the realm of sensations and is used in the analysis of visuals designed to provoke strong emotions, either pleasure or fear and disgust. The visuals that come under these codes are often linked to art in its various forms, such as paintings, cinematography, or theatre. They can be used in photography, advertising and communication, and fashion. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164). Art can be analysed by another orientation. Applying to both science and art, abstract coding orientation is based on conceptual criteria. This approach allows less concrete material to be analysed, by giving greater validity to elements that allow a general, essential reading rather than a specific or detailed one (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164). Oppositely, the naturalistic coding orientation, rooted in common perception, is dominant in Western society and the Western media. This orientation values visual elements that are closest to reality, or more precisely to the representation of reality held by the person using this orientation. When this orientation is used, the abstract is judged to be unreal, and therefore invalid. This orientation is particularly relevant in the visual analysis of political or media communication, enabling one to assess the proximity to the audience's reality and therefore to judge its validity (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.164-165).

To go back to the example of modern artwork or the journalistic picture, the individual would potentially use the abstract coding orientation for the art to validate that visual as artistic; while when it comes to the journalistic picture, the audience would shift to the naturalistic coding orientation since this picture is supposed to represent an aspect of the world the audience lives in daily (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021, p.82-84).

2.3   Operationalising Framing and Multimodal Discourse Analysis

The upcoming section will display the two analytical frameworks that will be used to analyse the data, to answer the research question *How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that*

mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations? First, the framing method to analyse the speeches on a linguistic aspect will be discussed, while the Multimodal Discourse Analysis will supplement it by analysing the visual aspect of the speeches.

2.3.1 Framing Method

In order to look at the discourses and to observe the shift in the perception of France by Burkina Faso, the analysis will focus first on a textual and qualitative analysis. This analysis will look at the framing of France and international partners as well as the neo-colonialist rhetoric present in the discourses. To do so, this analysis will be based on the four aspects in which neo-colonialism can take place: Economy, Politics, Culture, and Religion, as mentioned above. Those aspects will be used as the Frames to analyse each text and will be analysed according to the different types of framing, used as indicators as explained below. Indeed, when it comes to public relations, Hallahan (1999) referenced seven different framing models: Situations, Attributes, Choices, Actions, Issues, Responsibility, and News.

Framing *situations* involves identifying and picturing scenarios from everyday life and literature, focusing on the dynamics between individuals in these contexts for a nuanced understanding of the situation. This enables a structural analysis of the arguments used in communication, following a method that illustrates a situation and allocates a relevant context. This concept of framing is versatile and therefore relevant to discourse analysis (Hallahan, 1999). Another type of framing is *attribute*, which involves strategically highlighting or downplaying particular characteristics in order to shape the audience's interpretation and reaction. This is used particularly in marketing, advertising, and the media, in other words, in areas where the aim is to persuade the audience (Hallahan,1999). When it comes to framing *choices*, it depends on whether decisions are presented negatively (emphasising potential losses) or positively (emphasising potential gains). Hence, this introduces biases into the decision-making process, particularly in situations characterised by uncertainty. It looks at risk-taking and its motivation: either to avoid losses or to seek potential gains. The analysis of framing *choices* involves the scrutiny of survey results or the examination of public opinion on specific issues, which underlines the importance of having access to the collective sentiment of the public (Hallahan,1999). Another framing model, similar to *choice*, would be *action* framing. Framing *action* is a way of shaping communication to determine the most appropriate measures that individuals can take to achieve the desired objectives. It is a matter of looking at the presentation of alternatives, whether in positive or negative terms. This framing model draws attention to the positive consequences, while it emphasises the need to avoid the negative

consequences or losses associated with not taking the specific action. Nevertheless, scholars have observed that presenting actions in terms of potential negative outcomes tend to have a greater persuasive impact than highlighting positive consequences or gains (Hallahan, 1999). *Issue* framing examines how social problems and disputes are described in public debate directly or through the media, often leading to resolution in public policy forums such as legislatures or courts. This approach allows parties to offer various explanations to establish their preferred definition of a problem or situation (Hallahan, 1999). By focusing exclusively on presidential speeches in this analysis, we explore how these speeches perceive and present social conflict in an agenda-setting process. On another hand, *responsibility* framing is intricately linked to most social issues and problems by focusing on notions of cause and responsibility for the origin of events. This is not a neutral process, as individuals perceive their own implication in events according to their self-perception, in order to maximise their benefits and minimise their guilt (Hallahan, 1999). They therefore tend to attribute the origin of these events to internal or external factors, attributed more to personal actions than to the recognition of systemic problems within society. However, this attribution process is likely to be biased by a variety of factors, including lack of effort in the search for the optimal explanation, the prevalence of alternative explanations, the existing knowledge and patterns, and personal interests (Hallahan, 1999). Finally, *news* framing consists of studying the descriptive means of news used by the media to convey information. The media rely on well-known themes that resonate in a given culture in order to dominate their proposed framework and thus increase their influence (Hallahan, 1999).

Most of these models are relevant to the analysis of presidential speeches, except for Attribute, Choices and News, which are models corresponding exclusively to the analysis of media, marketed documents or analysis of surveys. Since we only have access to the speech given by the president and not the reaction to it, those models will not be analysed. Therefore, in this paper, I will analyse my data using each of these models as indicators for the larger frames selected. In other words, those indicators would enable the understanding of how the neo-colonial aspects are portrayed and framed in the speeches. Moreover, each phrase will be examined to determine the appropriate context and associated indicators and analyse the implications for local and international governance. The question of the neo-colonialist influence of these textual elements will then be assessed. This will enable an equivalent analysis of each text and its own frames so that the findings can be compared.

2.3.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis

As explained in the section on MMDA, one of the orientations with which it is possible to perceive an image and thus understand its meanings is narrative coding orientation. This orientation is relevant because it reflects the reality of life as seen by individuals, particularly in the visual analysis of images that may have a connection with everyday life. As presidential speeches have a direct impact on people's lives due to their institutional nature, this code is the most useful for analysing videos of speeches.

This coding orientation can be compared to a frame since it is a way to understand and process information. Therefore, the narrative coding orientation will become an added indicator in the analytical framework explained above. By doing so, the visuals will be analysed, including the colours, the surroundings and placement in space, and the main speaker, in this case, the president, in the different aspects of neo-colonialism.

Thus, when taking all of the explained frames and framing aspects together, the analytical framework that will be used to analyse the New Year Presidential Speeches can be summarised in the following table:

Frames / Indicators	Economy	Politics	Culture	Religion
Situation				
Action		Textual and visual elements		
Issues				
Responsibility				
Narrative coding Orientation				

Figure 2: Analytical Framework conducted in this thesis.

2.4   Conducting the analysis

As explained above, this thesis will analyse presidential New Year speeches from 2015 to 2023. In the analysis, the frames detailed in the previous segment will be organised into a comprehensive table within Microsoft Excel. Each column in the table will correspond to the identified frame for each category of speeches, while each row will represent an indicator, as described in Figure 2. Textual elements will be recorded as quotations, referencing the page in the respective document where they were located. The original speeches being fully in French, the tables will be filled up with the quotes in the original language and will then be translated in the analysis. Since I am a French native speaker, I will translate those quotes myself. To

streamline cross-referencing and simplify the full reference for each quote, each quote will be referenced to only the year of the New Year speech and its line number in the document, resulting in a format like this: "Quote" [English translation] (2015, l. 3). The year it will refer to is the new year starting, which means that a speech held on 31 December 2014 or on 01 January 2015 would be referred to as 2015.

Both the table and the original documents will be available in the appendices, categorised alphabetically. For instance, Appendix A.1, B.1, C.1 will correspond to the textual documents, Appendix A.2, B.2, C.2 to the visuals, and Appendix A.3, B.3, C.3 to the framing tables.

These tables will serve as the foundation for a comparative analysis, where each category will be examined in chronological order. In each separate analysis, the quotes will be employed to scrutinise each document, and to identify elements that fall into the frames and indicators. Due to space constraints, the written analysis will focus on the most pertinent examples for each of the frames and indicators, rather than elaborating on every quote discovered for each frame.

The analysis will be divided into four different categories, as mentioned in section 2.1.2., under which the New Year speeches will be compared and analysed according to the findings for the frames and indicators. This means that the frames will be described thanks to the indicators for each of the speeches, and compared for speeches that fall into the same categories. Therefore, section 4.1. will compare the 2015 and 2016 speeches across the different frames and their indicators. This section will therefore analyse the economic, political, cultural, and religious aspects retransmitted in the discourses preceding the security crisis. Section 4.2, which covers speeches from 2017 to 2020, will then analyse them comparatively according to the same frames and indicators, thus observing the development of priorities during President Kaboré's first term in office. Section 4.3. will focus on the speeches of 2021 and 2022, the period marking the start of President Kaboré's second term. This section will analyse these speeches using the frames and indicators and will be in the form of a comparison. Finally, section 4.4. will focus primarily on the analysis of 2023 using the same frames and indicators, since the year 2022 was a dynamic year in the Burkinabe political sphere. Grouping the analysis of the speeches and comparing them under the sections mentioned above, will allow us to observe the different political priorities and rhetoric throughout the different political periods that have successively occurred since the end of the Compaoré regime and the inception of Operation Barkhane.

Following the analysis chapter, there will be a subsequent chapter titled 'Discussion', which will compare and explore the results of the separate analysis within the larger context of neo-colonialism and social constructivism to present an answer to the research question.

2.5 Limitations

Before digging into the analysis, this section will briefly outline the limitations of this thesis in addressing the formulated problem. First, due to security concerns, no field research, or interviews with key stakeholders, such as CSOs, were conducted. This limitation arises from security issues for both the researcher, a French national, and potential interviewees. The enabling environment in Burkina Faso being closed was a contributing factor to this decision. Second, the study acknowledges an inherent bias, given the European perspective of the researcher. Although efforts will be made to articulate each step of the analysis, the Western focus of the analysis may impact the contextual depth of the study. Third, challenges in accessing documentation during coup periods limit the scope of the study to political speeches, as media dissemination is primarily through social platforms and institutional websites are underdeveloped. Fourthly, relying solely on presidential speeches may present a tilted perspective, emphasizing the government's viewpoint and potentially generalising it as the national perspective, without incorporating citizen input. Finally, while the analysis expands beyond international partners to focus on national politics, the absence of a direct citizen perspective through reader input poses a limitation on the comprehensiveness of viewpoints considered in the thesis.

3 Burkina Faso, France and the rise of Jihadism

Before moving forward to the analysis, it is essential to lay out the political and socio-economic situation in Burkina Faso. Thus, this section aims to provide a brief but nuanced understanding of the contemporary diplomatic crisis that has arisen between Burkina Faso and its former coloniser, France, with a specific focus on the events that led to the need for the Barkhane operation as well as its ending.

3.1 Burkina Faso: A breeding ground for insurgency

3.1.1 Political and Socio-economical context on Burkina Faso

Since the early 2010s, the Sahel has been facing a severe food and nutrition crisis, due to factors such as water scarcity, natural disasters, high inflation, and massive refugee flows, exacerbating the poverty (DG ECHO, 2012a). Moreover, the countries of the region are facing

a demographic explosion (Torres Saavedra, 2019). The different Sahelian governments have declared their countries in crisis, seeking humanitarian aid like Burkina Faso did in December 2011. DG ECHO (2012b; 2012a) has reported helping over 1 million people in 2012, including over 77000 children and 650000 pregnant women and new mothers. Moreover, Health crises in vulnerable populations persist due to limited healthcare access. Additionally, 39,6% of the population in 2014 lived on $2,15/day (World Bank, n.d.). Furthermore, natural disasters and climate change have led to land desertification, increasing the marginal areas that can be farmed, creating discrepancies and competition among farmers, multiplying tensions and local violence (EPRS, 2021). These factors, along with local disputes and humanitarian crises, contribute to community discontent and radicalisation.

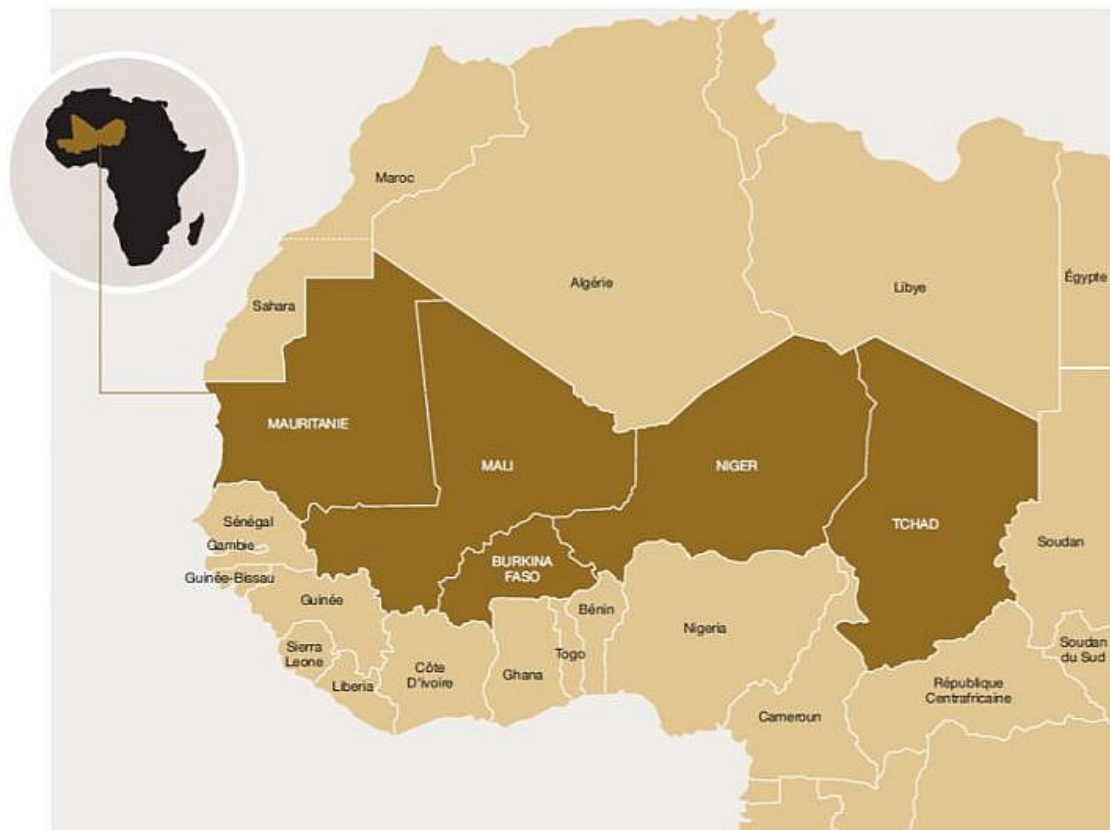*Figure 3: Burkina Faso in the Sahel (G5 Sahel, 2020)*

As a result, Burkina Faso, country situated in the Sahel as shown in Figure 3, is listed among the poorest countries in the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, n.d.). Considered the most stable in the region under a 27-year-long semi-authoritarian regime (Hilgers & Loada, 2013), recent political crises have weakened the country and its sovereignty.

The former president of Upper Volta, which became Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré was in power from 1987 to 2014 (McKenna, n.b.). A graduate of the military school and a member of the government of his predecessor Thomas Sankara, he seized power following a coup orchestrated by himself, Zongo and Lingani, leading to Sankara's death on 15 October 1987 (McKenna, n.b.). After amending the constitution several times, Blaise Compaoré ran for and won several presidential elections, often marked by boycotts, keeping him in power until 2014 (McKenna, n.b.). In November 2010, Compaoré changed the constitution enabling him to run for a fourth mandate. However, in 2011, the population's protests, rising along the 2000s, turned into really violent riots highly repressed by the regime. Protests and riots kept increasing (Hilgers & Loada, 2013), until October 2014, when Compaoré intended to abolish from the constitution the article regulating the presidential terms limit, which would allow him to run for another presidential term, and theoretically for life (Cummings, 2014). This announcement fuelled an ongoing feeling of revolt among the Burkinabe, who responded surprisingly fast and violently (Hagberg, 2016). Despite his announcement to drop the amendment, the protests did not cease and removed Compaoré from power. A transitional government led by Michel Kafando ensued, but instability persisted, exemplified by an attempted coup in September 2015 (Hagberg, 2016) led by the Regime de Securité Présidentielle, known for being very close to the Compaoré administration (Hagberg, 2016).

In the meantime, a non-international armed conflict has been waging on Malian territory since January 17, 2012, involving its army and armed groups such as MNLA (Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad), AQIM (al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), and Islamic militias (United Nations, 2012; The Office of the Prosecutor, 2012). It generated a severe humanitarian crisis, leading to large population movements within Mali and towards neighbouring countries (Diarra Doka et al., 2014). This spillover effect increased internal displacement, escalating the humanitarian crisis and regional insecurity. The lack of a strong government response allowed local theft and violence to perpetuate instability (United Nations, 2012).

During Compaoré's regime in Burkina Faso, a security network contained jihadist threats, ensuring stability despite semi-authoritarian practices and human rights violations (Elischer & Hoyle, 2023; Hilgers & Loada, 2013) However, the abrupt political transition, marked by violence and lack of a consensus on governance, weakened the institutions (Hagberg, 2016). The breakdown of the security structure facilitated Burkina Faso's rapid shift into violent conflict just one year later (Elischer & Hoyle, 2023). Moreover, the 2003 Law 32/2003 allowing community policing under administrative oversight led to the rise of self-defence

groups (Haavik et al., 2022), creating a conducive environment for violent entities like robbers, and militias, providing fertile ground for jihadi organizations (Kane, 2019). In January 2016, the first terrorist attack occurred in a hotel, starting a massive series of jihadist attacks, and a spread of their network. Burkina Faso is now considered one of the two epicentres of the conflict with Mali (Elischer & Hoyle, 2023).

In 2022, Burkina Faso experienced two coup d'état, shaking again its political landscape. The first coup occurred on 24 January 2022, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba, president of the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration (MPSR), supported by the opposition group (RTB, 2022a). It was motivated by the security meddling of the Kabore government in containing insurgency and terrorist groups. (RTB, 2022a). On 30 September 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, the new figure of the MPSR removed Damiba since the MPSR considered him not fulfilling the initial ambitions and objectives (RTB, 2022b).

3.1.2 An ideal environment for the expansion of extremist groups

Since 2003, the Sahel has been a hotspot for extremism and jihadist groups (Dumas et al., 2021), exacerbated by the founding of the AQIM in 2007, and numerous of splinter groups (Dumas et al., 2021; UN Security Council, n.d.). These groups follow jihadism, a revolutionary ideology historically linked to jihad, which has shifted into an "eternal confrontation with [Islam's] enemies, who have to be defeated by any means necessary" (Kusserow & Pawlak, 2015, p. 1 l.1). It is inspired by religious puritanism and political Islamism, aiming to develop societies based on a 'pure' Islam and Islamic laws (Kusserow & Pawlak, 2015). These groups constitute a large network continually evolving and creating new entities such as Ansarul Islam in 2016, and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin in 2017, in Burkina Faso (IISS, 2019).

Jihadi groups employ diverse operational strategies, though common patterns emerge. Firstly, they aim to advance from northern Mali toward the south, impacting Burkina Faso, which explains the proliferation of jihadist groups in the country. Kidnapping foreigners, often from the West, for ransom, is a favoured tactic, as well as terrorizing local population by kidnapping schoolchildren, or using of suicide bombings, with would-be martyrs on foot, their explosive charge directly on their body, or more recently by driving explosive-laden vehicles (UNODC, 2012; EPRS, 2021). There are also frequent cross-border attacks on civilians and security forces (Townsend, 2012). Other crimes, such as summary executions, or mass rape, aim at maintaining terror and thus assert control (Townsend, 2012).

Jihadists' recruiting and radicalising methods are also very diverse but share recognisable patterns (UNDP, 2023). They are using anti-system rhetoric and selling values such as a strong sense of belonging and religious values. To target large numbers of people, Jihadists exploit the vulnerability of the youth since 45.3% of the population was under 15 in 2018 (IOM, n.d.). For example, hundreds of Malian children aged from 9 to 17, have been recruited, trained, and deployed in the field (The Office of the Prosecutor, 2012, s. 40). This method observed in Mali highly suggests its replication in neighbouring countries where jihadist groups are active. Also, internal disputes, especially ethnic or farming tensions, are exploited (EPRS, 2021), as well as targeting prisons, or reaching communities on social networks (Sambe, 2019).

3.2 The involvement of France in Burkina Faso and the Region

3.2.1 A regional and international effort

Burkina Faso and the region have, throughout the years, employed several strategies to tackle these issues, starting by organizing regional cooperation, followed by calling for international support.

3.2.1.1 The G5 Sahel joint Force: a regional collaboration

In the interests of unity and collaboration, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger jointly created a regional organisation, the G5 Sahel, on 16 February 2014 (G5 Sahel, 2015). This organisation aims to be a communication and coordination point between the Sahelian countries with the international community, in order to combine efforts and have a common approach to issues affecting the region (Desgrais, 2018), namely counter-terrorism and cross-border crime, a need to stabilise governments and institutions, development of the poorest areas, infrastructure deficit, food security and sustainable agriculture, climate change and natural disasters, and the development of populations and their social rights (Convention Portant sur la Creation du G5 Sahel, 2014).

On 02 July 2017, the G5 Sahel launched the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S), for joint military operations and intelligence exchange to counter cross-border extremist threats (Sommet extraordinaire du G5S Déclaration de Bamako, 2017). It brings together different law enforcement authorities and is divided in seven battalions placed strategically around the region (OECD, 2018). French military supports FC-G5S via Operation Barkhane for training, logistics, and operational guidance, in particular through bilateral operations (d'Evry, 2015). It has been financed over the years by the Member states, the UN Security Council, Saudi Arabia,

the EU, and keep looking for other financial partnership (Sommet extraordinaire du G5S Déclaration de Bamako, 2017; OECD, 2018).

However, the G5 Sahel and the FC-G5S have been encountering challenges in meeting the initial objectives. The rise of coups d'état and changes of governments destabilise the organisation due to a lack of follow-up and different views as to the governance of this organisation or the FC-G5S. Moreover, on 16 May 2022, Mali announced its withdrawal from the G5 Sahel and from the joint military operation (Hugeux, 2022), considered a "step back for the Sahel" (United Nations, 2022), and is depriving its neighbours of a common strategy, the only way to tackle the extremists groups (Larcher, 2022; United Nations, 2022). The lack of funding and coordination consequently blocked the FC-G5S from being resourceful and progressing too slowly, resulting in no major changes to the military structures (Goya, 2021; Oxfam France, 2022).

3.2.1.2 International Assistance

Burkina Faso seeks international aid to combat insurgency and maintain stability. Global response includes increased military operations like MINUSMA, Barkhane, and EUTM, supported by the UN, France, and the EU (United Nations, n.d.; Ministère des Armées, n.d.; European Union, n.d.). Moreover, UN, EU, and EU donors have implemented diverse development programs, with the EU investing over 230 million euros in Burkina Faso since 2014 (European Commission, n.d.). Figure 4 shows the net official development assistance received by Burkina Faso, demonstrating the growth in the development aid allocated to the country. The pic of aid in 2020 relates to the health crisis from the Covid-19 pandemic, aiming to stabilize the health crisis.
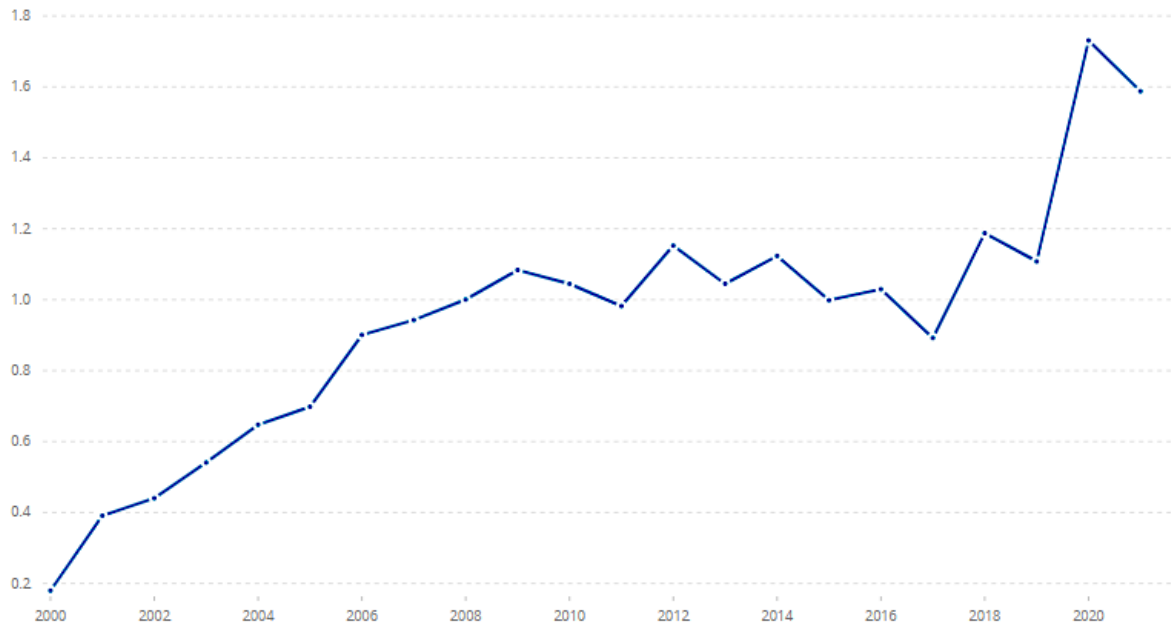
Figure 4: Net official development assistance received in Burkina Faso (in US$) (World Bank, 2023)

However, international programs lacked systematic collaboration, overlapping some areas and ignoring others, such as addressing migration tied to the conflict. French aid, by neglecting the region, resulted in less ambitious and costly programmes, with poor collaboration and limited dialogue with the local population and civil society (Oxfam France, 2022). It resulted in minimal tangible and sustainable impact (Guiffard, 2023a). From 2018, some partnerships were implemented for better collaboration among development programs. Unfortunately, due to the escalating anti-elites and anti-French/Western sentiments, these cooperation tools were implemented too late (Oxfam France, 2022).

3.2.2 Barkhane Operation

Operation Barkhane was a military operation implemented by a consortium of Western countries led by France, in the five Sahel countries (d'Evry, 2015). This section focuses on different aspects of this operation: its launch, stakeholders, and evolution throughout the years; and the ensuing outcome, as part of the overall investment of France.

On January 11, 2013, French President François Hollande declared the Serval operation to contain jihadist groups in Northern Mali, at the demand of the Malian President at the time, Amadou Toumani Touré (Elysée, 2013). The international community supported it as a success for swiftly deploying 5000 soldiers, responding to the Malian President's plea. Launched 5 hours after the announcement, the operation utilized surprise to push back Islamist groups

(d'Evry, 2015). After 18 months, Serval received positive evaluations for intelligence, military strategies, and Sahelian-French collaboration (d'Evry, 2015). However, weaknesses emerged, such as political pressure, minimal troop numbers, and logistical challenges in the expansive and arid region (d'Evry, 2015).

Following Serval and due to spreading extremist groups in all Sahel countries, a coalition led by France launched Operation Barkhane on 01 August 2014. Building on Serval's success, it expanded its military presence for political visibility (d'Evry, 2015) and to restraint terrorism away from European borders. Barkhane aimed to counter terrorist groups, minimize security crises, and empower local forces. Its broader mission included support on political, governance, and development fronts for the Sahelian stability and recovery (Allizard, Cigolotti, & Carlotti, 2023).

Legally, Barkhane operates with G5 Sahel's political mandate, allowing the operation to take place in all five countries of the G5 Sahel (Tertrais, 2016). Since 2014, France's Barkhane operation has grown to 5,250 personnel, €1 million budget, and comprehensive military, intelligence, and a strong diplomatic presence (Dumas et al., 2021; Allizard, Cigolotti, & Carlotti, 2023). By its side, the local armies have been trained and deployed along the territories covered by Barkhane as well as by the different borders (Dumas et al., 2021).

In addition, France has implemented development aid programmes to support civil action and the most isolated areas. France allocated 150 to 350 million euros annually via AFD (Agence Francaise au Développement) development loans, supporting projects in water access, urban transport, education, healthcare, and social protection (Allizard, Cigolotti, & Carlotti, 2023). Furthermore, the EU, led by France, has set up the TAKUBA Task Force, focused on training local armies and deploying them to certain areas covered by Barkhane (Dumas et al., 2021). Although France was the leader of the operation, and various European countries provided support, including the UK (helicopters and troops since 2018) (Ministry of Defense, Baldwin, & Lancaster, 2018), the Czech Republic (60 personnel since January 2020) (Pejšek, 2021; Grohmann, 2020), Estonia (troops since 2018, including a 50-strong infantry unit in 2021) (Estonian Defense Forces, 2021), and Denmark (aircraft and 70 personnel between 2019 and 2020) (Danish Ministery of Defense, 2022).

Barkhane has been witnessing different phases all along its implementation in order to adapt to the different evolutions of the political and socio-economical contexts. Following up the work of the Serval operation, the first phase of Barkhane (2014-2015) first needed to be

launched and to spread quickly in order to maintain a high level of surprises to stop and weaken the terrorist groups fighting in the region. This phase was the important due to the spread of the military over the five countries (Dumas et al., 2021). The second phase of the operation (2015-2017) was aimed to contain the threat in the North of the region and to stabilize it in order for those areas and for the local populations to find some peace and be able to develop with the Tuareg and the terrorist forces already implemented there (Dumas et al., 2021). This surprised-based strategy weakened the terrorist groups at the outset, but this strategy, based on the continuous movement of troops and the spread in the region, required a large number of financial, material and human resources that Barkhane did not necessarily have, especially over the timeframe of this operation (Goya, 2021). This strategy quickly became obsolete. Critics argue that it contained the threat initially, but over time allowed the threat to spread (Goya, 2021). Despite victories in eliminating key jihadist leaders, restraining large-scale attacks and negotiating the Algiers Agreements, violence has been rising drastically since 2019 with great difficulty in maintaining it (Guiffard, 2023a; Goya, 2021). Moreover, Communication aspects were a notable concern, with Barkhane highly criticized for insufficient collaboration with other regional military operations since the mandates and missions are distinct but overlap, by sometimes covering similar issues or aiming for opposite approaches (Dumas et al., 2021). Communication gaps extended to the French public, revealing a democratic deficit, as the government has poorly consulted the French people, and provided limited information and public discourse (Oxfam France, 2022).

The third phase (2019-2021) has been essential to give a new incentive to the operation and enhanced a highly needed collaboration with G5 Sahel and other international forces leading to a reshaping of the strategy with greater pressure on the enemy. (Dumas et al., 2021). Hence, the Pau summit on 13 January 2020 established the Coalition for the Sahel, aiming for a more effective coordination and interaction among international partners, and better support for local armies. Thus, the focus is on generating coherent and cohesive action on a regional scale, uniting stakeholders on security, political and development issues (Coalition Sahel, n.d.). However, this strategic reshaping comes at a very late stage, and the consequences of 6 years of a more or less unchanged strategy could not be prevented (Goya, 2021; Oxfam France, 2022).

Finally, in 2021, talk of a readjustment took place to approach the main issues and the question whether or not it was time to end Barkhane (Bouboutou, 2021). Critics thought it would be premature due to the high instability of the region, despite public opinion in favour of a

withdrawal (Bouboutou, 2021). Indeed, this operation has been highly costly financially and the operation has bogged down (Dumas et al., 2021) making its withdrawal complicated (Allizard, Cigolotti, & Carlotti, 2023). Moreover, the operation was tarnished by governance and human rights issues, with reported civilian killings and alleged soldier violence (Oxfam France, 2022; Amnesty International, 2020). Furthermore, Operation Barkhane has demonstrating a lack of support for governments to extend their authority within their own borders, fostering paramilitary militias, and new sources of crisis (Goya, 2021; Allizard, Cigolotti, & Carlotti, 2023). French strategy's slow adaptation, due to a sometimes complex and slow administration, exacerbates strategic and political disadvantages (Goya, 2021).

In June 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron announced in a speech during the G5 Summit held in the United Kingdom that France would end the Barkhane operation since the local governments have to maintain their authority on their own territories (Al Jazeera, 2021). France tries its best to reassure people about its continuing commitment in the other Sahel countries, after Mali officially requested France to withdraw the operation (Elysée, 2022). On 9 November 2022, President Macron annonces the official end of Barkhane within the next six months with a temporary strategy in order to transition towards the end of the military operation (France 24 & AFP, 2022).

4 Analysis

The following chapter is structured into four categories, comparing New Year speeches from 2015 to 2023 based on frames and indicators. This structured approach reveals evolving political priorities and rhetoric since the end of the Compaoré regime and the inception of Operation Barkhane, allowing to answer *How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations?* Thus, Section 4.1 look at the 2015 and 2016 speeches, examining economic, political, cultural, and religious aspects before the security crisis. Section 4.2 analyses speeches from 2017 to 2020, observing the development of priorities in President Kaboré's first term. Section 4.3 focuses on 2021 and 2022 speeches, marking the start of President Kaboré's second term. Section 4.4 concentrates on the dynamic political year of 2023, applying the same frames and indicators.

4.1 Post-Compaoré: A transition to a new and elected government

This first section of the analysis focuses on the New Year speeches for 2015 and 2016. Delivered respectively by the President of the Transition Michel Kafando and President Roch Marc Christan Kaboré, these speeches are analysed together in order to look at the transition from the Compaoré regime to a new republic. This section looks at these discourses together, and their cultural, economic, political, and religious aspects.

Cultural

First and foremost, when it comes to the cultural aspect of the speeches, it is mostly about looking at the politeness and formality of the speeches, due to the absence of mentioning the cultural sector of the country. President Kafando addresses the population, beginning with "Chers frères et amis résidant au Burkina Faso" [Dear brothers and friends living in Burkina Faso] (2015, l.2). Brothers and friends are part of the vocabulary of family and private life. By addressing the population in this way, combined with his great honesty and frankness, he creates a close relationship with his audience.

In a different way, the 2016 speech seems to mark a hierarchical difference between the government and the people. In fact, President Kaboré uses a lot of metaphors in his way of expressing himself and regularly punctuates his speech with polite expressions to address the people (2016, l.1; 2; 18; 34; 59; 89; 96). Generally, and compared to the 2015 speech, which seemed more accessible and less literary, the 2016 speech seems more elaborate, at the risk of losing the least educated part of his audience. Indeed, only 38.7% of the population part to the age group which officially corresponds to secondary education have been enrolled for a secondary education in 2021, showing that most of the population is poorly educated (The World Bank, n.d.).

Moreover, it is essential to understand the neo-colonial dimension of the New Year's speech. In the 2016 speech: "je voudrais [...] sacrifier à la tradition " [I would like to bow to tradition] (2016, l.3-4) of holding a New Year's speech. It is relevant to ask where this tradition comes from. In fact, the presidential New Year's speech has been particularly common in Western countries for several decades, even since the colonial era. In France, it has become an official presidential speech in 1959 with President Charles de Gaulle (Leblanc, 2003). It is now an exercise that every president undertakes and were and are retransmitted in all the French territories (Leblanc, 2003). Following a script, being strictly directed and filmed from the Elysée (presidential palace), it is the political *rendez-vous* between the President and the French citizens, framing the national identity for the upcoming year (Van Noije & Hijmans, 2005;

Leblanc, 2003). It can therefore be argued that the New Year's speech is a vestige of the colonial era. By applying it and emphasising the fact that it is a tradition, the acting President is showing his adherence to these Western traditions. In addition, the scenery for these speeches respects the codes of New Year's speeches in Western countries.

Economic

When it comes to examining the economic aspects of the 2015 and 2016 speeches, Presidents Michel Kafando (2015) and Roch Marc Christian Kaboré (2016) have different approaches to addressing economic matters in their respective speeches, which reflect distinct priorities in the communication of budgetary issues for the coming year. In fact, whereas President Kaboré remains vague about his economic intentions for 2016 by not mentioning any financial aspect of his agenda, President Kafando clearly outlines his budget and some economic initiatives to look forward to in 2015. He addressed the economic aspect of his political agenda in his speech, focusing essentially on the various initiatives that the Government of the Transition will and must put in place in the course of 2015. These economic measures make particular mention of social measures in favour of young people and their recruitment (2015, l.49-51), but also in favour of the economic development of certain sectors considered urgent, such as "le recrutement massif, d'agents de santé formés" [the massive recruitment of trained health workers] (2015, l.58), "répondre aux besoins des structures sanitaires les plus déficitaires [meeting the needs of the health structures with the greatest shortfalls] " (2015, l.58-59) or "le maintien et la consolidation de l'effort budgétaire sur les secteurs sociaux" [maintaining and consolidating the budgetary effort on the social sectors] (2015, l.69). His intentions are therefore clear: to invest more resources in developing several social sectors such as infrastructure, farming, education, research, etc. By implementing such a program, the government wishes to develop their society, thus becoming more independent and self-sufficient. He also clearly communicates "le budget de l'Etat 2015[,] qui s'élève à 1 515 milliards de francs CFA" [the 2015 State budget, which amounts to 1,515 billion CFA francs] (2015, l.73-74), thus demonstrating transparency towards the people.

Political

From a political point of view, there are several similarities between these two speeches, particularly in their approach to certain issues, such as the 2014 Uprising and the credibility of the country at the international scale, but also in the differences in the subjects tackled and the angles given to certain themes, particularly concerning the political agenda.

Visually, the set-up for the presidential speeches for both New Year 2015 and New Year 2016 is identical: the presidents were wearing formal, non-traditional clothing consisting of a dark suit, a clear shirt and a tie; they are seated behind a lectern, with a Burkina Faso flag placed at the president's right side; the background is in bland colours, allowing the speakers and the national flag to stand out. The speech seems to be hold inside, thus it is possible to assume that it is filmed in the Kosyam palace (Burkinabè presidential palace). Even the oration is similar, with no facial expression and a calm, monotone voice, slow speech rate and an emphasis on important words to get each message across clearly. These oratory techniques can be considered comparable to those used by Western presidents in public speeches.

Moreover, both speeches mention the uprising that took place on 3 and 31 October 2014, resulting in the resignation of President Compaoré. Both Kafando and Kaboré take a positive view of this event, which nevertheless caused casualties, which both speeches are paying their tribute to. Both presidents approached the event with a rhetoric of action, mentioning the need for popular action and the positive consequences of the event. Kafando refers in particular to "un peuple révolté qui a décidé d'assumer son destin en se debarassant d'un pouvoir […] qui l'a conduit hélas, au précipice" [a population in revolt who decided to assume their destiny by ridding themselves of a power that had unfortunately led them to the abyss] (2015, l.6-8). Kaboré describes these elections as "une de nos grandes victoires et un des acquis incontestables" [one of our great victories and one of our indisputable achievements] (2016, l.25-26). The rhetoric used here can be likened to the rhetoric of the hero, for which this popular action is a great collective victory against the previous regime by a people who want to rebuild Burkina Faso. This showcases the will to develop a strong society, to become more independent, self-sufficient, and to offer a new future to the population.

Another point in common between the two speeches is the need to reassure international partners politically and to restore the government's credibility in the international arena. This means giving the international community responsibility for monitoring the elections and ensuring that they are held properly. First, the 2015 speech expresses the need to regain this credibility, with in particular the need for transparent elections "avec des résultats consensuellement acceptés par l'ensemble des Burkinabè et la communauté internationale" [with results consensually accepted by all Burkinabè and the international community] (2015, l.12-13). 2016, then, affirmed that Burkina Faso's credibility in the international arena had been restored, even going so far as to say that the Burkinabe people had "démontré, aux yeux du monde, le niveau de maturité de notre peuple dans la construction de la paix, et de la

démocratie" [demonstrated to the world the level of maturity of our people in building peace and democracy] (2016, l.34-35). Even if these speeches do not specifically mention which countries have the power to legitimise or discredit the sovereignty of another country, it is easy to argue that they are Western countries due to the liberal system, and France in particular, because of its proven influence in the region.

Nevertheless, many differences can be observed in the political aspects of these discourses. On one hand, 2015 is a very straightforward speech, with no detours. President Kafando is clear about his institutional agenda, giving precise dates and objectives for each action. The transparency he has demonstrated regarding the economic aspect of his government agenda is also evident in the political components of his speech. Kafando lists all the important economic and social points in his programme and commits himself and the transition government to concrete planned actions.

He is also very straightforward about the expectations that the people should have of this government, saying specifically "nous tracerons au moins les sillons, à charge pour ceux qui viendront après nous de les parfaire" [we will at least lay out the furrows, leaving it to those who come after us to perfect them] (2015, l.51-53). However, he expects other actors to help the government in achieving some goals, and therefore aims to allocate to them the responsibility of working together. He mentions that "[t]ous les partis politiques et les organisations de la société civile, en un mot les forces vives de la Nation, sont conviés à aider le gouvernement" [all political parties and civil society organisations - in short, the nation's driving forces - are invited to help the government] (2015, l.23-24).

Moreover, Kafando discusses several times issues and the social dialogue with the opposition and civil society. He is therefore very clear about his definition of social issues and the dialogue that can ensue. He has a "mission" (2015, l.81-83), that of restoring structure and strength to a democracy damaged by the previous regime. If an opposition group would behave strongly against his agenda, he clearly threatens them, denouncing their behaviour and threatening tougher sanctions if their behaviour continues. This occurs at two distinct moments in the speech. Kafando states, for example, that he "tien[t] à [...] avertir [les partis politiques, dont la suspention sera bientôt levée,] que la Transition n'aura pas d'état d'âme" [wishes to warn the political parties, which will soon have their suspensions lifted, that the Transition will have no mercy] (2015, l.32) if these parties endanger the nation through popular action. This reflects the instability in the country that led to the attempted coup in 2015 (Hagberg, 2016). In

addition, he denounced the potential excesses of certain groups and the challenges deemed unjustified by the transitional government, and comments that would not be taken into account in the reconstruction of the nation by saying that "il n'y aura pas de place pour les contestations injustifiées" [there will be no room for unjustified disputes] (2015, l.84-85).

On the other hand, in the 2016 New Year's speech, President Kaboré is making less commitments, taking on fewer responsibilities or engaging in less forward-looking actions. The timeframe for the fulfilment of the few commitments made remains vague compared to the 2015 speech. Also, the elements mentioned as responsibilities or actions relate more to the past or to the individual commitment of citizens expected by the government. For instance, Kaboré refers to the 2014 insurrection as "une de nos grandes victoires et un des acquis incontestables qui révèle la grandeur et la solidité de notre organisation sociale" [one of our great victories and one of the indisputable achievements that reveals the greatness and solidity of our social organisation] (2016, l.25-26). He further adds that "nous pouvons nous réjouir de cette aptitude indéniable, qui caractérise les grands peuples" [we can rejoice in this undeniable ability, which distinguishes great nations] (2016, l.27-28). As seen in these quotes, Kaboré uses frequently the pronoun 'we' when referring to collective victories in the past. But when it comes to the future of the country and the work that needs to be done, Kaboré addresses himself almost exclusively to the people and in a way that, in an extreme case, could be considered infantilising towards local populations, saying in particular "je reste confidant en votre determination individuelle et collective" [I remain confident in your individual and collective determination] (2016, l.119) or "Je vous engage, chacun, […] a y mettre du vôtre pour [la] realisation [de mon programme], dans l'intérêt superieur de la nation" [I urge you, each and every one of you, to do your utmost to achieve my programme, in the best interests of the nation] (2016, l.87-88). Nevertheless, unlike in 2015, social dialogue does not seem to be as central to the new president's programme, since only one mention of social dialogue and no mention of potential concertation has been made. On the contrary, his discourse focuses mainly on the determination and sense of responsibility that the Burkinabe must adopt, on the strength of the army in protecting civilians, and on generosity and gratitude towards the international community.

Regarding the President's message to the international community, the 2016 speech demonstrates thankfulness towards international partners, in particular for their military forces deployed in the country but also for their financial support. The President wishes to "témoigner [la] gratitude [Burkinabè] à la communauté internationale" [express the Burkinabè's gratitude to the international community] (2016, l.109-110) and calls for greater international solidarity.

Thus, the 2016 speech seems to be addressed not only to the people of Burkina Faso but also to the international community. Around 25 lines of this speech are addressed to internationals, which represents 20% of the speech. This raises the question of President Kaboré's target audience. Is it the entire population of Burkina Faso, with its diversity and its different social classes, or is it the elites and international partners?

Along these discourses, the neo-colonialist ties are therefore highly demonstrated, particularly in the 2016 speech compared to the 2015 speech. This can be explained by the political variations in the country. Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, a coup occurred in 2014 to remove from power President Compaoré, who was strongly supported by the West, in particular for his international policy and for the impression of stability that he offered the country in a highly unstable region (Elischer & Hoyle, 2023). By removing him from power, the people also showed their disagreement with those who supported the government at the time, such as the Western powers. Furthermore, once the transitional government was in place, it was time to rebuild the country internally. The transitional government was required to be precise and transparent about its objectives and to put in place a vast and detailed programme in a very limited timeframe. In contrast, when President Kaboré came to power, the priority was to join forces with international partners to manage the security threat and obtain financial aid for the country's development. This speech, which seems to be aimed at international partners as well as the Burkinabe population, needs to be persuasive and must live up to the possible expectations of these partners, in order to ensure the country's development. Kaboré mentions in particular that:

 "[d]epuis son accession à la souveraineté nationale et internationale, notre pays a toujours bénéficié de la solidarité et de l'assistance de nombreux pays à travers les continents ainsi que des partenaires techniques et financiers" [since its accession to national and international sovereignty, our country has always benefited from the solidarity and assistance of many countries across the continents, as well as from technical and financial partners] (2016, l.106-108).

In trying to present the country as sovereign and stable, Kaboré appears to be demanding exemplary behaviour from the people, hence the seemingly condescending words of encouragement and the oratory of the president, as analysed above.

Religious

Finally, the last point in common between these speeches is the religious aspect. As mentioned in section 1.2.1. defining neo-colonialism, the monotheist religions have been brought by the colonialists. By maintaining those religions as a steady part of the culture, it shows the colonial strings attached to a country. Both speeches end with a biblical message to close their speeches, praying to a divine force for the protection of the country and its inhabitants (2015, l.113; 2016, l.126), even if a majority of the population is nowadays Muslim (ICG, 2016). Only the elite is catholic, since the colonial era (ICG, 2016). These phrases are, as Nkrumah (1965) points out, factors demonstrating the colonialist past and the neo-colonial present in the maintenance of these speeches.

4.2 The rise of terrorist attacks

This second section looks at the 2017 to 2020 New Year's speeches held by Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. These speeches are witnessing the rise and expansion of terrorism in the country and the region, and the socio-economic problems witnessed by the population. By comparing the economic, political, cultural, and religious aspects of those speeches, this section enables the understanding of the priorities of the speeches.

Economic

Regarding the economic aspect of Kaboré's speeches from 2017 to 2020, this collection of speeches allows us to see the progression of his economic agenda, which remains similar throughout these four years. This agenda is reflected in three major actions: the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2016-2020 (PNDES), social measures - concerning in particular the remuneration of public service workers - and an increase in the army's budget.

Unlike in 2016, when he never mentioned economic matters, President Kaboré used this opportunity during the 2017-2018 period to take a general overview of the situation and to set out his commitments. In his 2019 speech, he particularly stated that "la situation économique du pays s'améliore sensiblement, grâce aux efforts des régies de recettes, aux investissements structurants et au dynamisme du secteur privé" [the country's economic situation is improving significantly, thanks to the efforts of the national revenue authorities, structural investments and the dynamism of the private sector] (2019, l.50-52). By giving a positive account of the situation, he also showed that the country's economy is not completely based on public funds, which raises the question of the sustainability of this economy.

Moreover, 2017 marked "l'élaboration" [the elaboration] (2017, l.25) of the PNDES, with "la mise en oeuvre" [the implementation] (2018, l.8) in 2018, which will continue until 2020, as Kaboré states "malgré les difficultés du moment" [despite the current difficulties] (2018, l.45-47). The PNDES is a plan created by the government of Burkina Faso, over 60% of which is financed by its own funds, to revitalsse and develop the country as a whole (Burkina Faso, n.d.). In December 2016 in Paris, the government organised a conference of Burkina Faso's partners to mobilise external funding resources (2017, l.27-28; Burkina Faso, n.d.). Through this programme, President Kaboré intends to respond to certain issues that he mentions, such as the need to "trouver des solutions appropriées aux besoins de l'écrasante majorité de nos populations en matière d'accès à l'eau potable, à une éducation de qualité, à l'amélioration des productions, aux soins de santé, au logement et à la sécurité" [find appropriate solutions to the needs of the overwhelming majority of our people in terms of access to drinking water, quality education, improved production, healthcare, housing and security] (2017, l.32-35).

Throughout his first term in office, Kaboré repeatedly referred to private and external investment. It is essential to understand where these investments come from. Indeed, as with the conference held in Paris in December 2016, it is possible to postulate that these investments, and therefore the national economy, are based on investments from foreign countries or various groups of investors. As presented in section 1.2.1. defining neo-colonialism, financial or other investments from countries or groups of investors in a vulnerable territory can be seen as a neo-colonialist means of maintaining a hold on that territory (Nkrumah, 1965; Bayart & Ellis, 2000). Moreover, these investments are made at the heart of the State and the government's budget, directly impacting the country's political and economic agenda. This can lead to power struggles when it comes to decisions taken by the government for its country, as investors will only invest in what is profitable for them or what they believe to be advantageous. According to neo-colonialist logic, this grip on the country gives investors the opportunity to implement strategies that may be in their favour. A government's sovereignty over its territory can then be questioned.

Kaboré also mentions in 2017-2020 his intention to respond to social demands for better remuneration for civil servants. However, he continues to take up this same subject (2017, l.30-31; 2018, l.53-54; 2019, l.43-45; 2020, l.68-69), which raises the question of whether the government fully respects the social needs that have been expressed. In particular, he mentions in 2019 that the government will try "d'apporter des réponses aux préoccupations des travailleurs, dans les limites des possibilités de nos ressources financières, de nos engagements

et de la situation difficile que traverse notre pays" [to respond to the workers' concerns, within the limits of our financial resources, our commitments and the difficult situation our country is going through] (2019, l.43-45). According to the 2018 and 2019 speeches, these concerns relate to the inflation of the cost of living in the country (2018, l.52; 2019, l.32) and its consequences for local populations. These problems seem to have generated demands and actions on the part of civil society, defined as "une effervescence sur le front social" [effervescence on the social front] (2019, l.31) and "les grèves perlées et le dialogue de sourds" [strikes and dead-end dialogue] (2018, l.38-39), for which President Kaboré has called for "une trêve" [a ceasefire] (2019, l.39). The rise in terrorism and insecurity is becoming more and more of an emergency every year, to the point where the President is repeatedly asking the people to hold back their social demands in order to focus collectively on security issues. Indeed, he calls on individuals to show "solidarité […] pour assurer une répartition équitable des fruits de la croissance, dans l'objectif majeur de lutter efficacement contre la vie chère, la pauvreté et l'exclusion." [solidarity to ensure a fair distribution of the fruits of growth, with the main objective of effectively combating high living costs, poverty and exclusion] (2017, l.37-39). He keeps demanding more efforts from the population and tries to convince them that this is a global and long-term vision. Indeed, in all the socioeconomic actions he undertakes, the President tries to persuade the population, throughout this period, of the need for "vision d'ensemble qui devrait présider à toute initiative destinée à satisfaire les revendications" [an overall vision that should govern any initiative designed to satisfy demands] (2018, l.45-46). By doing so, this could be seen as an attempt to create more national coherence and a sense of national belonging, but could also be frustrating for the population that has removed Compaoré from the presidency in order to be heard and to access their social demands.

Political

The New Year speeches from 2017 to 2020 focus on the country's security situation and social needs. While 2017 was a short speech aimed at creating cooperation between the army and civilians, 2018 and 2019 set out the presidential objectives and agenda more precisely, focusing on social dialogue and the security crisis, with precise timing. These speeches make it easier to understand the government's line of action. The 2020 speech is Kaboré's last New Year's speech before the next elections, which enables a better comparison of the potential changes in the speech, both in the address to the people and in the address to international partners, as well as in the reflectivity towards his first presidential term.

From a political point of view, the 2017 to 2020 speeches address the threat of terrorism and military action, the development of democracy with a new constitution, justice within the country, and the successful development of international partnerships.

First, the years 2016 to 2019, which the 2017 to 2020 New Year speeches reflect on, were marked by war and repeated terrorist attacks. As explained in section 3.1.1., explaining the political and socio-economic context of Burkina Faso, on the night of 15 to 16 January 2016, Ouagadougou was hit by a bloody terrorist attack, the first of many. In his New Year's speech in 2017, President Kaboré described the situation: "[l]a liste des attaques terroristes perpétrées à Ouagadougou et à l'intérieur de nos frontières, avec son corollaire de victimes et de blessés " [the list of terrorist attacks perpetrated in Ouagadougou and within our borders, with their corollary of victims and wounded] (2017, l.6-7) is long, and in 2019 he observes "la prolifération des groupes armés terroristes dans ces zones et de leur mode opératoire" [the spreading of armed terrorist groups in these areas and their strategies] (2019, l.24-25). These attacks are dragging the country down in the armed conflict between the Sahel countries and the growing jihadist groups. These "forces du mal" [evil's forces] (2018, l.65; 2018, l.72; 2020, l.8), as Kaboré refers to, threaten the country and call for several actions to be taken to contain this threat and protect the population. By referring to the jihadist groups with this formulation, Kaboré wishes to create a sense of national belonging by polarizing the speech with a structural discourse 'Us versus Them'. He aims to bring the population and the government together against the same enemy.

The actions he aims to put in place to fight the common enemy include the adoption of various laws and reforms to the military system (2018, l.76-78; 2019, l.18-19; 2020, l.83-84) as well as the introduction of "l'état d'urgence" [state of emergency] (2019, l.22) in the most threatened regions. In each of his speeches, the President continues to thank the "Forces de Défense et de Sécurité, pour les victoires enregistrées ces derniers jours, dans la lutte contre le terrorisme" [Defence and Security Forces for the victories achieved in recent days in the fight against terrorism] (2020, l.78-79).

Nevertheless, on several occasions he tries to make civilians responsible, to encourage them to collaborate with the military in tracking down jihadist groups (2017, l.15-17), as well as in educating young people about the values of the nation (2018, l.130-131). Indeed, he stresses that divergent outcomes and opinions about government governance should not be excuses for joining a jihadist group and fighting against the nation (2020, l.11-13). He also tries to

encompass everyone in his speeches, particularly in 2020. The president addresses all population groups, even the prisoners and young people, which was not necessarily done earlier. This raises the question of whether this is an election campaign technique or a way of approaching the groups targeted by the recruitment methods of jihadist groups (2020, l.4-18). Both goals would be beneficial to Kaboré's rhetoric since he aims to create a feeling of national belonging and places himself as the president who brings those people together. It therefore would gather the citizens around him and not towards the opposition parties or the jihadist groups.

In order to present an overall objective for the population, Kaboré presents in his 2017 speech a list of "combats" for civilians. These are objectives to enable the development of the nation. This makes it possible to unite the entire population, both civilians and soldiers, behind a common war: the war to secure and develop the nation. Indeed, he suggests that one cannot be achieved without the other (2020, l.43-44). This is also reflected in the nation's development goals in the rhetoric. The 2017 speech is positive about the country's future thanks to its sustainable and social development, which would enable "l'approfondissement continu de la démocratie, de la consolidation de la paix et de la tolérance pour un Burkina prospère" [the continuous deepening of democracy, the consolidation of peace and tolerance for a prosperous Burkina] (2017, l.22-24). To consolidate this democracy, the top priority would be to "doter notre pays d'une nouvelle Constitution" [provide our country with a new Constitution] (2018, l.99) and thus move towards the Fifth Republic. Each year he announces the adoption of this Constitution and its implementation (2019, l.83-84); admittedly, today it is still being discussed by the authorities (Le Monde & AFP, 2023b). This shows a deep disagreement between the different authorities and the social partners to agree on a constitution, revealing the differences on the governance strategy of the country.

President Kaboré sees an increase in social demands every year (2018, l.105-106; 2019, l.6-7) and states that he is ready to take action, with "la mise en place du Haut Conseil du dialogue social" [setting up the High Council for Social Dialogue] (2018, l.116- 117). By doing so, the government is hoping for a strike ceasefire and is seeking to put in place an "esprit de dialogue constructif entretenu en permanence avec les partenaires sociaux et les acteurs de la scène politique" [spirit of constructive dialogue maintained on an ongoing basis with the social partners and political players] (2017, l.21-22). The strikes and social demands, as seen above, demonstrate the need for rapid and equitable reform. Even if he considers that this social dialogue is beneficial and sufficient (2019, l.76), he nevertheless continues to make citizens

accountable and continues to ask them to get involved and assume their responsibilities to help build the society of tomorrow (2019, l.46; 2019, l.92-94; 2020, l.65-67; 2020, l.75-77). The repetition of these same issues and the adoption of similar positions year after year suggests that the government is struggling to meet its political commitments and implement its vision. This can lead to public frustration and distance between the people of Burkina Faso and their government.

Another subject raised, echoing the country's historical and political past, is access to equal justice for all citizens of Burkina Faso. In his speeches in 2018 and 2019, Kaboré expressed his desire to give responsibility to those involved in the judicial system, which needs to regain the trust of the people, particularly with the new investigations into the "dossiers judiciaires du putsch de septembre 2015, de Norbert ZONGO et de Thomas SANKARA" [judicial cases of the September 2015 putsch, Norbert ZONGO and Thomas SANKARA] (2019; l.52-53). As seen in section 3.1, Zongo and Sankara, two political figures, were killed without a fair trial (McKenna, n.b.). By reopening these cases, the President hopes to re-engage the people of Burkina Faso with their justice system. To do this, the President does not underestimate the responsibility borne by the judicial system in this task, stating that it is time to restore the integrity and independence of the judicial system, enabling the application of the law and impartial justice for all (2018, l.81-86; 2019; l.52-53). As the legal system is closely linked to the government, by building trust between the legal system and the people, he hopes to build trust between the people and their government and therefore re-establish and reaffirm the country's independence.

Finally, concerning foreign partners, there are still passages directed to foreign partners and the foreigners residing in Burkina Faso, but the length of these passages is decreasing. As seen in section 3.1.2.1, the G5 Sahel was officially implemented in 2017. The 2017 New Year's speech states that:

"[l]'opérationnalisation en cours de la force conjointe du G5 Sahel dans le cadre de la lutte contre le terrorisme et les trafics illégaux de tous genres, grâce à l'aide de nos partenaires, participera sans nul doute à anéantir ces forces du mal" [the ongoing operationalisation of the G5 Sahel joint force as part of the fight against terrorism and illegal trafficking of all kinds, thanks to the help of our partners, will undoubtedly help to wipe out these forces of evil] (2018, l.70-72).

The government of Burkina Faso firmly believes in this coalition of countries as a response to the threat of terrorism throughout the region, as well as other common problems. This organisation is seen as an opportunity to combine efforts to address these problems, as well as to combine sources of funding (2020, l.79-82). As France is a privileged partner of this organisation, it regularly attends important meetings, demonstrating a form of influence in the country. Moreover, this organisation seems to be key for Burkina in its fight against terrorism, but also in its need to find its "place qui est la sienne, dans le concert des nations" [rightful place in the world community of nations] (2020, l.52-53). The government is seeking to shine on the international stage, and President Kaboré does not hesitate to emphasise the credibility he is building internationally (2019, l.66-67; 2019, l.70), as a factor for success and stability. In his 2019 speech, the President places even greater emphasis on the G5 Sahel, since that year Burkina Faso holds the presidency (2019, l.71). He seems even more confident of his good relations with his foreign partners at the end of this year of governance, in particular with "les pays amis au plan régional et international" [countries that are regional and international friends] (2020, l.50-51). This suggests that Burkina Faso wishes, at this point, to continue to develop its collaboration with Western countries already involved in the region, such as France (2018, l.152-153). Finally, in his 2019 speech, the President states that he has established new general consulates in several countries (2019, l.81-82), without mentioning exactly which ones. This suggests that new partners could be considered.

Cultural

Culturally and visually, the President no longer wears formal attire consisting of a dark suit, white shirt, and tie. For New Year's speeches from 2017 to 2020, President Kaboré wore traditional Burkinabe clothing woven in the Faso dan fani style. This is the traditional fabric from which the country's most popular garments are made, woven by hand and characterised by its colours and lines (Ouédraogo, 2023). The word Faso dan fani is derived from Bambara, meaning 'woven pagne of the homeland' (Ouédraogo, 2023). By wearing this garment, the President shows that he is close to his people, wearing the clothes that characterise them and that have been made by local craftsmen. It thereby also distances himself from the West and former colonisers. Furthermore, the background is light and colourful, and seems to be blue and warm colours painting with some motifs (2017; 2018; 2019; 2020). This painting is similar to the work of the Burkinabè artist Salifoura, who is known for his paintings combining traditional materials and modern abstract art, in which he aims to bring harmony and cohesion (Meet Art Concept, n.d.). This painting is framed in a white and golden frame.

Another cultural aspect appeared in the 2017 speech, with a passage encouraging the national football team, the Etalons, in their participation in the African Cup of Nations (2017, l.64-65). The President insists on their responsibility to their country. This sport, imported into Africa by the Europeans, has become one of the most important and followed sports on the continent, revealing the continent's colonial past (Basyouny Abd Elhaleem, 2022). This African Cup of Nations is thus an important international event that could help legitimising the country's existence in the football world. Since this sport has a high impact of geo-political issues and diplomatic discussions (Basyouny Abd Elhaleem, 2022), winning this cup would potentially offer new opportunities to the country at the regional and international level. However, with the sport receiving more and more investment from the Gulf States, while remaining a very European sport (Basyouny Abd Elhaleem, 2022), this raises questions about the government's potential intentions: reassuring existing partnerships or looking for new ones.

Religious

As in 2016, the religious aspect remains present in each of President Kaboré's speeches, with the exception of the 2019 speech, where no mention was made of it. Nevertheless, the other three speeches continue to end with the words "Dieu bénisse le Burkina Faso" [God bless Burkina Faso] (2017, l.71; 2018, l.156; 2020, l.100). In 2017 and 2018, the President even allocated a section to address the customary and religious authorities, for whom he showed "la gratitude de la Nation pour toutes leurs initiatives en faveur de la paix et de la cohésion sociale" [the Nation's gratitude for all their initiatives in favour of peace and social cohesion] (2017, l.61-63), particularly in the "conservation de nos valeurs fondamentales et celles en faveur de la paix, et de la cohésion sociale" [preservation of our fundamental values and those in favour of peace and social cohesion] (2018, l.140-144). Religion, despite being a vestige of colonialism as explained by neo-colonialist academics (section 1.2.1), would be an important element in the protection and development of state initiatives. This would ensure that the country is behaving properly. In 2020, there is no mention of customary and religious authorities. On the contrary, President Kaboré invites citizens to pray "[p]our le repos éternel et glorieux de toutes les victimes du terrorisme" [for the everlasting and glorious rest of all the victims of terrorism] (2020, l.28-29).

4.3 Kaboré's second run through Covid-19

The speech for the New Year 2021 is Kaboré's first speech following his re-election in 2020. Kaboré reviews the health and security situation, setting both as the country's main

priorities. This section looks at the speeches of 2021 and 2022 through their economic, political, cultural, and religious aspects, and analyses the potential shifts in rhetoric and in the issues addressed.

Economic

From an economic point of view, and according to the 2021 and 2022 speeches, the country's economy is experiencing positive growth, both at the end of the first term of office and the following year (2021, l.37-38; 2022, l.15-17). In fact, during the 2022 speech, the President mentioned in particular that the national economy "a affiché un taux de croissance de 2%, un des meilleurs des Etats membres de l'Union économique et monétaire Ouest-africaine" [has recorded a growth rate of 2%, one of the best of the member states of the West African Economic and Monetary Union] (2022, l.15-17). This could be attributed to the increase in internal resources, suggesting that the share of external financing would be reduced. Following this logic, it would be possible to adopt the hypothesis that the more Burkina Faso is in control of its economy and able to turn increasingly to reinvestment of internal resources, and therefore less financially dependent on external investors, the more the country would be sufficiently dependent to stabilise its economy (Nkrumah, 1965, p.256; Khaled, 2018).

The government then plans to reinvest, in a structural way, to continue to develop the country economically and socially (2021, l.40-42; 2022, l.22-23). The speeches of 2021 and 2022 are clear and precise about the economic agenda and the various priorities, in terms of infrastructure, energy and employment aid (2021, l.38-39). The 2022 speech goes even further by clearly detailing its intentions, with objectives defined and communicated in the form of bullet points, particularly with regard to the "Plan National de Développement Economique et Social (PNDES II) qui a été récemment adopté pour la période 2021-2025" [National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES II) which has recently been passed for the period 2021-2025] (2022, l.105-106).

While from a political point of view it is possible to observe the total absence of any mention of international partners and their development aid, only the mention of PNDES II, it is then relevant to ask where the funding for this programme would come from, since the former PNDES had been the subject of significant participation by external partners. This can be seen as a move away from neo-colonialism, as he no longer finds it necessary to examine the country in the context of the international aid it receives, but rather focuses on the country as an independently functioning entity.

President Kaboré is once again trying to rally the population around him and is inviting people to "se mobilis[er] comme un seul homme" [mobilise as one man] (2021, l.40) in order to continue economic growth and meet his agenda. In 2022, he even spoke of the need for "résilience de nos population" [the resilience of our people] (2022, l.18). However, as seen in previous speeches, the population has constantly been called upon to take responsibility, to be resilient and to show solidarity. Eight years after Compaoré's departure from power, asking the population to make a further effort in a difficult security and health context could exhaust the population and cause a firestorm.

Political

In the 2021 and 2022 speeches, a great deal of space is devoted to what could be likened to the country's political life, discussing, in particular, the electoral processes initially planned, but also social dialogue, in all its complexity, ambitions, successes and failures. President Kaboré also reviews the legal situation, echoing the points made in previous sections. Finally, he reviews the country's security and health situation.

On 22 November 2020, the presidential and legislative elections took place (2021, l.19-20), and President Kaboré was re-elected, mentioning in his 2021 speech that this would be his "second et dernier quiquennat" [second and last term] (2021, l.45) as constitutionally established. By mentioning this, he is demonstrating his confidence in his own judicial system and in Burkina Faso's democracy as a whole, since he recognises the constitution and accepts the power it wields over him. 2021 is therefore an important speech in which he presents several political actions. Unlike the 2016 speech, in which he placed the responsibility for the successful implementation of his programme on the people, here he clearly states that "équipe gouvernementale sera constituée et va se mettre au travail immédiatement pour dérouler le programme pour lequel j'ai bénéficié de la confiance des Burkinabè pour les cinq années à venir" [a government team will be formed and will set to work immediately to implement the programme for which I have received the trust of the Burkinabè people for the next five years] (2021, l.70-72). This change of rhetoric enabled the President not to set himself against the population, but to show that he wished to establish a climate of trust for this new mandate.

Nevertheless, in 2021, the electoral calendar for the municipal elections was altered and elections were organised (2022, l.40-42). According to the 2022 speech, the government has set up a dialogue with civil society in order to address the issues leading to electoral change in the country (2022, l.44-47).

Social dislocation, as seen in the previous section, has become an increasingly important part of Kaboré's programme. He wishes to continue and relies heavily on his planned meetings with civil society organisations, hoping to establish "un dialogue fécond et respectueux" [a fruitful and respectful dialogue] (2021, l.50). In his 2022 speech, he did not hesitate to express his "gratitude aux partenaires et aux ONG qui se battent sur le terrain […] aux côtés du Gouvernement" [gratitude to the partners and NGOs who are fighting on the ground alongside the Government] (2022, l.82-85). He is therefore trying to show a form of cohesion between civil society and the government, seeking to rally the population around the government. He constantly seeks to make each citizen responsible, proclaiming that "le salut de [la] Nation viendr[a] de notre capacité individuelle et collective à oser ensemble le changement porteur de paix, de démocratie, de cohésion sociale, de justice et de prospérité partagée." [the salvation of the Nation will come from our individual and collective ability to dare together to bring about the change that will bring peace, democracy, social cohesion, justice and shared prosperity] (2021, l.56-59). By repeatedly seeking "l'unité nationale et dans un état d'esprit patriotique" [national unity and a patriotic spirit] (2022, l.118-120), he also shows that this collective unity has not yet been achieved. Furthermore, in 2021, as expressed in his 2022 speech, he faced the suspension of the political opposition's participation (2022, l.50-52) in this consultation. He defines the situation as regrettable, but it reveals a deeper problem and opens a breach in political cohesion, raising the question of whether the government is still able to communicate with the rest of the population.

With regard to the legal situation, the President intends to speed up the "procédures pour le jugement des affaires emblématiques comme les dossiers Thomas SANKARA et Norbert ZONGO" [procedures for the trial of emblematic cases such as the Thomas SANKARA and Norbert ZONGO cases] (2022, l.29-31): the people need answers. Presidents Kafando and Kaboré have been promising a fair trial since the Compaoré's removal from power in 2014.

Finally, the year 2020 was marked by an unprecedented health crisis due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time, the security crisis is intensifying. This "double crise sécuritaire et sanitaire" [double crisis of security and health] (2022, l.5-6) is reflected in the consequences and losses in his 2022 speech (2022, l.5-7), while he tries to convey a message of hope and determination in his 2021 speech (2021, l.8-10). Regarding the health crisis, in his speech opening up the year 2021, President Kaboré called on everyone to take responsibility for complying with the health regulations that had been implemented and which had been reinforced at the end of the year (2021, l.82-83). The President asked everyone to act

responsibly because "[l]a santé étant la condition de la vie, il faut que chaque Burkinabè soit l'artisan et le meilleur défenseur de sa santé" [health being the condition of life, every Burkinabè must be the architect and the best defender of his or her health] (2021, l.86-87).

With regard to the security crisis, Kaboré refers in his speeches to a rapid and unprecedented increase in attacks, which "[l]e point culminant a été atteint ces dernières semaines" [has culminated in the last few weeks] (2022, l.61). He then explains his military strategy using the metaphor of a house infestation. In particular, he refers to a strategy of "nettoyage des zones infestées par les terroristes" [cleansing terrorist-infested areas] (2022, l.100) as one of the major priorities for the coming year 2022.

Cultural and Religious

From a cultural point of view, the speeches of 2021 and 2022, the visual layout of the speech and the courtesy forms remain similar to the speeches of 2017 to 2020. As in the 2017 to 2020 speeches, President Kaboré wore traditional Burkinabe clothing. The main difference with the previous speeches is that the president used to wear a big golden watch, which is not there anymore in the 2021 and 2022 speeches. This shows humility, to remain closer to the people and distanced from the riches and judged corrupted elite, as well as from the West and former colonisers. It can be interpreted as a wish from the government to push the political strategy used in the first term towards more independence.

As in the speeches from 2017 to 2020, the presence of religion in President Kaboré's speeches is often used to conclude the speech. In 2022, faced with a deteriorating situation, President Kaboré invited the population to "multipli[er] les prières pour nos héros disparus, pour la paix et la sécurité au Burkina Faso" [multiply prayers for our missing heroes, for peace and security in Burkina Faso] (2022, l.10-11).

Therefore, President Kaboré tries to convey stability and a coherent political strategy, since not much changed in the cultural aspect of the speeches, and he uses religion as an ending on a unifying note of peace and stability.

4.4 Post-coups government: The military in power

This section focuses exclusively on the 2023 New Year's speech, due to the country's political context. As discussed in section 3.1.1.1, 2022 was a challenging year for the country and its government, as two coups d'état took place. On 24 January 2022, the first coup took

place, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Damiba, while the second was held by Captain Traoré on 30 September 2022. These military officers are affiliated with the MPSR, the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration. The New Year's speech for 2023 was therefore given by the current President of the Transition, Captain Traoré. Like the previous ones, this speech is analysed in terms of its cultural, political, economic, and religious aspects to understand the differences with the previous governments.

Cultural

From a cultural point of view, the staging and oratory tools used for this speech are very different from previous speeches. In fact, this speech is less structured, looking more like a cheerful and motivational speech towards the military than a New Year's speech as seen in the previous speeches. First, the speech does not take place in the presidential palace as usual, but in Selenzo, the capital of a province that has just been released and regained, as the President presents it (2023, l.10-11). Moreover, he is dressed like a soldier ready for battle, with fatigue, weapons and ammunition attached to a bulletproof jacket. The background behind him is no longer the usual Salifoura painting, he is now standing outside, in front of the local Police Station, surrounded by at least 18 soldiers at rest. The flag is placed above the head of the president and not quite visible, especially when there is a zoom on the president's face. He speaks slightly with his hands. Everything suggests that the President is trying to get rid of the codes and formats used in previous speeches and any similarities to Western countries. He intends to present himself as a soldier like any other, ready for battle and who has left his loved ones behind. This sends a strong message to the nation: by showing that he is simply one Burkinabè among others, he is aiming to prove that he understands the people and will fight until the death to protect them.

Political

Indeed, the 2023 speech can be considered as a war speech. Ibrahim Traoré is not only portrayed as a president, he is also a war leader, present from the first day of the year to support his soldiers and his people. In doing so, he is demonstrating that he is a front-line politician, not a bureaucratic one. Traoré spoke mainly to the soldiers and their families. His speech is a tribute to the strength of the Burkinabe nation and its military, and he suggests that this nation alone is enough to win this war and restore its sovereignty over its territory. In fact, instead of the usual 'Happy New Year' formula used to close a New Year speech in every other analysed speech, President Traoré ends his speech with the expression "La Patrie ou la mort, nous

vaincrons!" [Fatherland or death, we shall win] (2023, l.129), a saying used to close every MPSR speech. This speech is primarily that of a military leader seeking to motivate his forces and convince the population of the necessity and exemplary nature of the army. In particular, he explains how the soldiers and other armed forces defending Burkina Faso find the courage and motivation to continue fighting. In particular, he mentions "toutes ces femmes, mères et épouses" [all those women, mothers and wives] (2023, l.89) and "dans les yeux des enfants" [in the eyes of the children] (2023, l.28). He even describes these women as "les plus grands combattants" [the greatest fighters] (2023, l.19) and "héroïnes" [heroines] (2023, l.89), because of their courage in keeping lives together when the men are fighting.

This speech appears to be a communication from a soldier to the general public about what it is like to be a soldier in wartime. In his speech, he uses military vocabulary and explains various aspects of Burkina Faso's defence to the local population, outlining the current state of the country's security and what needs to be improved. However, he remains very evasive, both in the details of the current state of affairs and in his assessment that things are on the right track (2023, l.45-47; 2023, l.48-50; 2023, l.51-52; 2023, l.67-70; 2023, l.126-127). He does not give a precise timeframe either, preferring formulations such as "bientôt" [soon] (2023, l.82), "dans les jours à venir" [in the coming days] (2023, l.65) or "dans les plus brefs delais" [as soon as possible] (2023, l.69). Furthermore, he makes no mention of the coups d'état that occurred, or of the consequences of those coups. He does not address the issues of social dialogue or the health crisis, leaving open the question of Covid-19, whether it is still a threat or not, and what its consequences have been for Burkina Faso in 2022. These elements, found in the previous speeches, demonstrate by their omission a desire to disengage from the codes previously established by the neo-colonialist forces and focus on a concrete subject that speaks to the people: war. Indeed, everyone is affected by war in one way or another: soldiers and para-military personnel, their families, people living in war zones, companies and their economies, medical staff, etc. When he discusses other subjects, President Traoré presents them from the war perspective. In fact, when he talks about development, particularly in terms of infrastructure, he mentions the military necessity of this development, and not the social necessity as Presidents Kafando and Kaboré did in their previous speeches (2023, l.71-76). In addition, he prioritises projects that can facilitate the defence strategy, choosing "quel programme urgent d'investissement en infrastructures routières pour accompagner l'élan de cette guerre" [what urgent road infrastructure investment programme to accompany the momentum of this war] (2023, l.74-76). The same approach is used when addressing logistical

issues (2023, l.57-59), as well as the country's governance, which he believes has been "longtemps piétiné" [trampled on for a long time] (2023, l.78-79).

Regarding the international dimension of his speech, he mentions international partners and their support when it comes to the war (2023, l.114-118). He, however, remains unclear to whom he is referring to. By the end of 2022, diplomatic relations with France had drastically deteriorated, to the point of requiring the removal of the French ambassador (Le Monde & AFP, 2023a; France 24 & AFP, 2022). It is therefore clear that the hegemonies mentioned here are not France or Western countries. Given Burkina Faso's recent ties with Russia, but also with countries such as, more recently, Iran (Jeune Afrique, 2023; RTB, 2023), the assumption would be that the partnerships mentioned by Traoré are these countries. This represents a radical change in the country's international relations.

Economic

Economically speaking, there is no mention anywhere of a budget or various economic sectors. This suggests that the government has no specific strategy other than to finance the war. This is in contrast to the speeches made by Kafando and Kaboré, who have repeatedly addressed the issue of economic and social development as a strategy for strengthening the country in time of war. That strategy, which could be seen as rather Western, is therefore essentially being replaced by combat.

Religious

From a religious point of view, this speech never mentions the religious authorities but thanks the women and the civilian population several times for carrying the combatants in their prayers (2023, l.90; 2023, l.97). This shows an attachment to religion, despite its colonial aspect, as defended by Nkrimah (1965) and described in section 1.2.1, which defines the possible aspects of neo-colonialism.

5 Discussion

All along the analysis, the speeches have displayed a shift in the national portrait and identity, showing a development of neo-colonialist influences throughout the New Year's speeches, from highly Western-oriented speeches to a vivid desire for independence with a rejection of the established neo-colonialist powers. The Burkinabè identity has been built with high regards to France and the western system since the colonial era. It can thus be argued that

this identity has been constructed on neo-colonial influences of France, because of their shared history, and their partnership in militarisation and development aid over the last ten years. Indeed, since the start of Operation Barkhane in 2014 (d'Evry, 2015), the successive heads of state of Burkina Faso have first of all expressed their gratitude towards their international partners, thus France, for their military and social interventions, except the 2023 speech. This was particularly noticeable in 2015 and 2016 speeches, which intended to demonstrate the stability of the country to the international community and ensure the government's credibility in managing the country. This is essential because without proving its willingness to manage the country properly, the Burkinabe government risks worrying its Western partners, particularly France and the European Union, and losing funding. Burkina Faso must therefore be able to demonstrate a low level of debt, hence a stable economy (AFD, n.d.). This reassuring discourse has worked: several development programmes have been developed and put into action by the UN, the EU, and its member states. For instance, the EU has been developing and implementing programs for over 230 million euros since 2014 in Burkina Faso (European Commission, n.d.).

Moreover, Burkina Faso has shown great enthusiasm for the establishment in 2017 of the FC-G5S in which France played a major role (Sommet extraordinaire du G5S Déclaration de Bamako, 2017). However, this enthusiasm seems to be fading as the Brakhane operation gets increasingly bogged down and its performance declines (Dumas, Mauborgne, & Serre, 2021). Although the references towards international partners have decreased, demonstrating a reduced enthusiasm, these references have not disappeared, in particular in 2018, due to the implementation of the second phase of Operation Barkhane: the search for cohesion (section 3.2.2.). Held a few days before the Pau Summit establishing the Sahel Coalition, the 2020 speech demonstrates a strong desire to position itself on the world scene and to play a crucial role. It suggests that collaborating and maintaining a partnership where France would be involved would be an important decision for the development of the country, according to the socially constructed understanding of France by Burkina Faso.

Unfortunately, criticism and scandals towards the French presence are multiplying, damaging the relations between the French and Western armies with the local populations, as reflected by the almost total absence of international partners in the 2021 and 2022 speeches. Barkhane, its strategy and its results, have not lived up to the promises made through social acts of France (section 3.2.2.). The Burkinabè government and its population have thus socially re-interpreted their relation to France and found themselves dependent on a neo-colonial regime with limited

capacity and resources to respond to immediate and urgent needs, both military and in terms of economic development. The shadow of human rights scandals and the denials of civilian casualties caused by the French army (Oxfam France, 2022; Amnesty International, 2020), have given a bad reputation to Barkhane, which played a key role in the frustration of local populations and the rise of anti-French sentiment (Oxfam France, 2022).

Additionally, in the different speeches from 2015 to 2022, two major focuses in the different political and economic agendas are displayed: defence and development aid, which are two main issues shaping the neo-colonialist and anti-French sentiment (Guiffard, 2023b). Since both of those agendas were partially based on France's action, and due to an obsolete or unsuccessful military strategy (Goya, 2021; Oxfam France, 2022) and ineffective development aid with a lack of cooperation and high levels of corruption, these agendas could not be achieved as planned (Guiffard, 2023a). With promises made and no results delivered, the population has lost confidence in their government, making France accountable for its control over the sovereignty of the country. French governance of operations has lacked transparency, accountability and inclusivity (Oxfam France, 2022). This trust was already based on weak foundations due to the legacy of highly corrupt elites (Oxfam France, 2022). Since the identity of the country has been constructed on strong relations to France, sharing a common history, the idea that France and the French-educated elites running the country could fail generated a strong disbelief, and thus a strong reaction. Local populations have perceived France's involvement as essentially supporting the governments in place, even though these governments are poorly perceived by the population due to corruption and various scandals. This commitment is reflected in the French government's virulent denunciation of coups d'état (Oxfam France, 2022). In addition, the narrative presented by France, and its attitude towards its local partners, was judged as condescending and arrogant by the local populations, increasing a feeling of disaffection (Oxfam France, 2022).

As a result, anti-French sentiment has continued to grow and take centre stage in public opinion. Moreover, scholars who have worked on colonial issues have observed that the psychological effects of the oppression felt during the colonial era, such as the inferiority complex, continue to impose themselves on the common mind and have repercussions on public and individual opinion. (Kebede, 2001). As a result, oppressive forms such as colonialism or neo-colonialism can generate a desire for independence, which will inevitably involve violence, leading to considerable political instability (Kebede, 2001). The consequences of this will be significant socio-economic depreciation of former colonies at the

time of their independence (Kebede, 2001). Eventually, this will lead to coups d'état to overcome the oppressive force.

In 2022, insurrections in Burkina Faso led to the MPSR seizing power on two occasions, because of the failure of the State and the government to address the security crisis and the urgent need to act, but also the desire for a societal change and a rupture with France (RTB, 2022a, RTB, 2022b). As a result, Traoré's government shows almost total opposition to the Western political codes previously used, demonstrating a desire to turn away from France and find new partners (2023). It is actively seeking to get rid of the neo-colonialist powers that have imposed themselves and to re-establish Burkina Faso's sovereignty. President Traoré recently stated that he was not against the people of France but against their leaders, demonstrating a real desire to construct a new identity for the country, with values and structures constructed through anti-western angenda and to re-establish new partnerships (Jeune Afrique, 2023). Strong links with Russia and Wagner's militia have been established for instance, especially ideological links, thanks to the fact that they share a common enemy and oppressor: the West (Vircoulon, 2023; Heywood et al., 2022), and thanks to Russia's neo-colonialist strategy to collectively work against that enemy (Nkrumah, 1965; Heywood et al., 2022). Evidence of this can be seen in President Traoré's speech at the second Russia-Africa summit, where he denounced the imperialist powers of the West and looked to the future alongside Vladimir Putin. (BF1 TELEVISION, 2023).

According to the logic of social constructivism, by holding France accountable for the security crisis and for the slow development of the country, Burkina Faso is showing that, in the past, it believed in the capacity of France to solve those issues and gave France the opportunity to do so without complains; unlike neo-colonialists that would argue that France took over the power without offering any other solution. Thus, while according to neo-colonialism, Burkina Faso wishes a total independence and to get rid of the former coloniser, social constructivists would argue that the understanding of France's actions has now changed, thus modifying the reaction of Burkina Faso towards it.

Consequently, in September 2022, following the coup d'état, the French ambassador was removed, without being replaced or reinstated (Le Monde & AFP, 2023a). In March 2023, the Burkinabè government terminated the 1961 military agreement with France, leading to the subsequent withdrawal of French forces (Le Monde & AFP, 2023a; France 24 & AFP, 2022). In September 2023, France took strict diplomatic measures against Burkina Faso, suspending

all its development aid and imposing visa restrictions on Burkina Faso nationals (Le Monde & AFP, 2023a). In response, Burkina Faso expelled the French military attaché, accusing him of subversive activities (Le Monde & AFP, 2023a).

Burkina Faso wishes to socially re-construct themselves and shape their identity against their former colonizer and other Western imperialist powers. This country has shaped their national strategy for decades, following the model of France and following France's wishes since it was seen as the main and only partner helping Burkina Faso to rise at the international level. However, after a few years of disappointment and of mistrust, Burkina Faso's government is reacting according to its understanding of France's acts. Given the shift witnessed all along the thesis and the events explained above, it seems unlikely that the relationship between the two countries will be able to return to a healthy dialogue and a strong partnership in the near future. Indeed, both neo-colonialism and social constructivism suggest that the actions and the behaviour of both countries towards each other will result in violent and repulsive actions to protect their own sovereignty.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to answer the problem formulation *How have the Burkinabè heads of state framed the shift in their relation to France over the French-led military operation and what does that mean for the post-colonial relationship between the two nations?* by analysing the 2015 to 2023 New Years speeches held by the different president of Burkina Faso and to look at the neo-colonial strings present in those speeches.

The analysis, based on Framing Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, reveals a shift in the country's relationship with France since the start of the Barkhane military operation. While neo-colonial influences were omnipresent in the early years of the military operation, particularly in terms of defence and development aid, these show a gradual desire for independence, marked by changes in the Head of State's attire, rhetoric and the textual space dedicated to international partners. Issues such as the governance of Barkhane, human rights scandals, and broken promises have eroded trust between Burkina Faso and France. Anti-French sentiment has grown stronger, fuelled by a perception of condescension and arrogance. This thesis shows a desire for independence, reflected in coups d'état and recent geopolitical realignments with Russia. The break with France is palpable in recent diplomatic tensions and President Traoré's desire for new partnerships.

This thesis is a small contribution to the field of European studies, providing a nuanced analysis of the changing dynamics between Burkina Faso and France, thus, a European Member State and its former colony. Focusing on the Burkinabè perspective, it reveals the complex shifts in the narrative and priorities carried by the Burkinabè government over the years, highlighting the impact of neo-colonial influences pervasive in military operations and development aid. Exploring anti-French sentiment and Burkina Faso's pivot towards new partnerships offers valuable insights into the complexities of diplomatic relations. Overall, this thesis focuses on post-colonial relations, offering an in-depth understanding of the challenges and geopolitical shifts in the Burkina Faso-France dynamic.

Although this is a master's thesis, it has some interesting implications. First, it provides an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of Franco-Burkinabè relations. Furthermore, by highlighting local perceptions and socio-political issues in Burkina Faso, it may contribute to better decision-making on the part of international actors, particularly regarding development aid. Therefore, although this is an academic work, its implications reside in its capacity to enlighten and inform the concrete actors involved in shaping relations between France or the European Union and Burkina Faso. However, the limitations of this thesis, namely that the researcher is French and that it is currently difficult to carry out fieldwork, are important factors to consider. The security crisis and the complex relations between the two countries, as seen throughout this thesis, have prevented a more in-depth local angle. For further research, it would therefore be relevant to conduct population-based surveys to understand the main drivers of anti-French sentiment. It would be useful to be able to compare the results between the different regions of Burkina Faso, on the assumption that each region has its own culture and is not equally affected by the various security and health crises that have affected the country. Another suggestion for future research would be to extend the research to the whole of the Sahel region, since armed conflict with jihadists has spread throughout the region and that France's relations with other West African countries have deteriorated dramatically the past years, notably Mali and, more recently, Niger.

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