



Government of Thomas Sankara,  
19831 (SANKARA)

MUNUC 34



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## CHAIR LETTER

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Hello delegates,

My name is Emily Gamboa, and it is my greatest pleasure in welcoming you to MUNUC 34! I look forward to serving as your Chair of Thomas Sankara's Government. This committee is based on the presidency of Thomas Sankara after the coup d'état that brought Burkina Faso into independence. As members of the Cabinet, you will have the opportunity to dive into the world of a new government to the rest of the modern and Westernized world, as well as creating and maintaining a strong reputation of the government in both international and domestic reforms. I expect each delegate to adapt to various challenges as the committee progresses throughout the weekend, as well as to be creative and open-minded with your goals in order to succeed in committee.

I am a third year in the College, majoring in the Biological Sciences with a specialization in Cancer Biology. Being born and raised in Chicago, I've been able to learn so much about a variety of cultures and ethnic backgrounds through exposure to Chicago's diverse neighborhoods. In addition to running a committee, I am also a delegate on UChicago's traveling team and an Under-Secretary-General at ChoMUN XXV, UChicago's collegiate MUN conference. Aside from Model UN, I am a research assistant at a cancer biology lab on campus, I volunteer at UChicago's Comprehensive Cancer Center, and I am a board secretary at the UChicago Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Thomas Sankara's government is a unique committee at MUNUC this year because it hopes to unravel a different perspective in an era of imperialism and Westernization. While this is a part of history that goes unaccounted for in many Western history classes, I hope that by the end of conference, delegates can develop an appreciation for learning more about how other nations influenced by imperialist motives from powerful nations can either strengthen or hinder such recipients politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Although it may seem overwhelming at first to see multiple countries knocking on Burkina Faso's door and to attempt to make peace with all of these countries, the true value of this committee lies in the delegate's ability to successfully define and maintain a new Burkinabe identity in an ever-changing Western world. I truly look forward to meeting with you all! Contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Emily Gamboa

[egamboa1@uchicago.edu](mailto:egamboa1@uchicago.edu)

## CRISIS DIRECTOR LETTER

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Hello delegates,

Welcome to MUNUC 34!

And, of course, welcome to Thomas Sankara's National Council for the revolution! My name is Emma, and I will be your CD this weekend, working alongside my excellent Chair, Emily, in addition to our lovely EAC, Samuel.

Before we get into committee business, a little bit about myself: I am a second year at UChicago, but call the Bay Area, California home. At school, I study Economics and Fundamentals (basically just spicy philosophy), intern with an organization doing election research, and spend lots of time on MUN-related things, including chairing a ChoMUN committee on the Mattachine Society, a queer rights organization, and competing with our MUN Team. Outside of school, you can find me biking as much as I can, drinking oat milk lavender lattes, writing poetry, and knitting hats.

As for our committee, I absolutely can't wait to get started and see what you all do with this exciting and fascinating point in history. Sankara's leadership comes at a crucial moment in time, as Burkina Faso transitions from being colonized by the French to being an independent country. This time of change means that the world of committee is wide open for you all to implement creative, brand new ideas. Throughout the weekend, you'll face pressing issues, both domestic and international to contend with. It'll be up to you how you approach them, but don't be afraid to think outside the box. After all, this is a revolution!

Before we kick off the weekend, I'll spend some time getting everyone acquainted with how to participate in a crisis committee. We'll go over expectations for writing notes, building crisis arcs, and participating in frontroom. Until then, the best thing you can do is read this background guide. Look for something in it that really excites you, and then go down a Wikipedia rabbit hole, learning as much as you can. Maybe you're really interested in the environmental aspects of this committee. Well, take that idea and think of an exciting way to bring the environment to the center of the

weekend. Do lots of research, and think big, perhaps even outside the borders of Burkina Faso. No matter what your interest is, I can't wait to see your passion, creativity, and engagement during committee.

Of course, if you have any questions about MUNUC, or just want to chat about \*literally\* anything, don't hesitate to reach out!

Your CD,

Emma Janssen

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## STATEMENT ON SENSITIVITY

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Please be aware that the following sections contain sensitive information concerning political violence, women's rights issues, tensions between ethnic groups, and other difficult topics concerning the aftermath of imperialism. While we acknowledge these events in order to provide an accurate account of the historical context in Burkina Faso at the time, this committee has zero tolerance for any of these actions to be implemented in a delegate's backroom arc or in a directive. Please be considerate of your actions in both the front room and backroom. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to the committee executives, as fostering an inclusive and safe committee environment for every delegate is of the utmost importance to us.

## TOPIC: SANKARA

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### Powers of Committee

The National Council for the Revolution has maintained a highly organized political structure all throughout the beginning of President Sankara's term (1983-87). The cabinet is divided into subgroups targeting specific aspects of civilian life (agriculture, law, taxes, etc), as well as a handful of community and regional ambassadors. In other words, The National Council for the Revolution has a well-functioning centralized government consisting of officials in specialized fields.

Although you are given a specific position within the cabinet, and we expect delegates to make use of the powers of their assigned characters, your contributions to debate should not be limited solely to your given area or department. In fact, delegates assigned to be a cabinet member will be expected to adequately balance their intentions and goals for this conference as your character and the general interests of the Burkinabe government for which you represent. Feel free to make use of the character's background to come up with creative solutions, but please keep in mind the objective of the committee is to come up with comprehensive solutions that incorporate all aspects of the Burkinabe government.

At this time period, Burkina Faso is not an active member of the international community, due to Sankara's implementation of his anti-imperialist ideologies into foreign policy. Taking this into consideration, we have included some positions outside of Burkina Faso, who will be ambassadors to regional groups and nations taking interest in the committee's actions at the time. International ambassadors have equal opportunities as their Burkinabe counterparts as members of this committee. Although foreigners may be able to initiate and direct projects overseas, the focus should be the influence of foreign presences on the current affairs of Burkina Faso. The powers of foreign influencers within this committee will be in relation to Burkina Faso; therefore, we encourage those given such positions to work closely with Burkinabe committee members to come up with solutions that reflect both domestic and international interests.



The main goal of structuring the committee with the domestic and international spheres of influence is so that the two groups will be able to provide integrated solutions not just in directives but also in backroom. Evidently, this will require strong substantive preparation not just of the assigned character, but in the current state of affairs of both groups.

# History and Context

## Geography and Climate of Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in western Africa, characterized by grassy savannas in the north and scattered forests in the southern region.<sup>1</sup> Throughout Burkina Faso is an extensive plateau, shaped by the country's three main rivers -- the Black Volta, Red Volta, and White Volta.

Despite the rivers, most of the soil in Burkina Faso is infertile.<sup>2</sup> In addition to infertile soil, Burkina Faso also experiences low rainfalls, deforestation, and desertification, all of which contribute to creating a harsh climate. Nevertheless, present-day Burkina Faso's agricultural sector -- mainly livestock, maize, rice, and cotton -- generates  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the country's GDP, and employs 80% of the population. Other than agricultural exports on surplus crops, Burkina Faso also has a large array of ores and minerals as natural resources. Such materials include salt, gold, limestone, and marble.<sup>3</sup>



Desertification is, and has been, a significant issue for Burkina Faso. Desertification is a process that affects the ground when the biosphere has disappeared, causing soil degradation and decreased soil fertility. Following this, levels of salt in the soil increase, only increasing erosion and risk of landslides. While desertification can be the cause of normal climate fluctuations, it is also the

<sup>1</sup> Image: "Burkina Faso." United Nations, n.d. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Un-burkina-faso.png>.

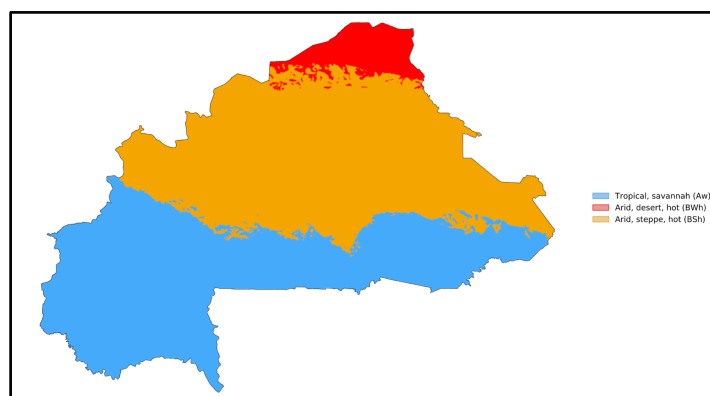
<sup>2</sup> Dresch, J., Deschamps, J. Hubert Jules, Echenberg, J. Myron and Guiguemde, J. Pierre H. (2021, March 10). Burkina Faso. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso>

<sup>3</sup> "Agriculture and Food Security," USAID. Last updated May 18, 2021. Retrieved June 16, 2021.

<https://www.usaid.gov/burkina-faso/agriculture-and-food-security#:~:text=Despite%20the%20harsh%20climate%2C%20Burkina,and%20mainly%20supported%20subsistence%20livelihoods>

consequence of human activity and human-influenced climate change. Deforestation, certain farming practices, and stress on water basins all exacerbate desertification.<sup>4</sup> Currently,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Burkina Faso's national territory is degraded by desertification. This adds up to 9 million hectares of land, and that area is projected to expand by 360,000 hectares per year.<sup>5</sup> Desertification has the potential to severely affect the livelihoods of those who live in Burkina Faso. Arid, degraded soil and increasingly frequent droughts contribute to political instability and food insecurity, which hurt millions of people.<sup>6</sup>

There are three general climate zones that are defined in the Köppen climate classification map.<sup>7</sup> The Sahel region (red) occupies the northern region of Burkina Faso, as well as the northern border of the Sahara Desert. It is a relatively dry tropical savanna, receiving less than 60cm of rainfall per year and has year-long high temperatures.<sup>8</sup> The Sudan-Guinea region (blue) occupies the southern and part of the western region of Burkina Faso, with cooler temperatures and receiving more than



90cm of rainfall per year. Bobo-Dioulasso and Banfora are two major cities located in this region. The Sudan-Sahel region (yellow) lies in the middle of the country, occupying most of the eastern and western regions of Burkina Faso. The climate is an intermediate between the Sahel and Sudan-Guinea regions<sup>9</sup>. Major cities in this region include Ouagadougou (the capital), Fada-Ngourma,

Kaya, Ouahigouya, and Dédougou.

<sup>4</sup> Simoncelli, Marco, "Burkina Faso, the people fighting desertification to save their land," Lifegate, retrieved June 16, 2021. <https://www.lifegate.com/burkina-faso-reportage-desertification>

<sup>5</sup> "Action Against Desertification" Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved June 16, 2021. <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/countries/africa/burkina-faso/en/#:~:text=One%2Dthird%20of%20Burkina%20Faso's,S%3%Agno%20in%20Burkina's%20Sahel%20region>

<sup>6</sup> Simoncelli, "Burkina Faso, the people fighting desertification to save their land,"

<sup>7</sup> Image: Beck et al.: Present and future Köppen-Geiger climate classification maps at 1-km resolution, Scientific Data 5:180214, doi:10.1038/sdata.2018/214 (2018)

<sup>8</sup> "SIM Country Profile: Burkina Faso". Archived from the original on 9 March 2008. Retrieved 14 June 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

North and west of Burkina Faso lies Mali, Niger to the northeast, Benin to the southeast, and Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo to the south.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Early History (14,000 BCE - 18th century)***

From 14,000 to 5,000 BCE, the northwestern region of modern-day Burkina Faso was inhabited by hunter-gatherers.<sup>11</sup> Around 3,600 BCE, these inhabitants established agricultural settlements throughout the area, and by 1,200 BCE the people of Sub-Saharan Africa had developed an iron industry. The Bura culture became dominant in the southeast region of modern-day Burkina Faso and neighboring areas of Niger. They ruled from the 3rd to 13th century CE. Between the 8th and 15th centuries CE, various ethnic groups that are still present in modern-day Burkina Faso began to arrive in the region. Among these ethnic groups were the Mossi, Fuly, and Dyula.<sup>12</sup>



### ***The Mossi People***

The Mossi people came to inhabit the region of modern-day Burkina Faso by riding horses up north from what is now northern Ghana. The Mossi settled in the basin of the Volta River, conquering the other inhabitants, such as the Dogon, Lela, Nuna, and Kurumba people. The Mossi instituted hierarchical societies, placing themselves as chiefs and the conquered peoples as commoners. Remnants of this political and social organization can still be seen in Burkina Faso today.<sup>13</sup> Members of the ruling class are known as the *nakomse*, and are direct descendants of the first Mossi invaders. Descendants of the originally conquered peoples are referred to as *nyonyose*. Additionally, there are

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<sup>10</sup> Dresch, J., Deschamps, . Hubert Jules, Echenberg, . Myron and Guiguemde, . Pierre H. (2021, March 10). Burkina Faso. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso>

<sup>11</sup> Image: Riou, Édouard. *Boukary Koutou, Also Known as Wobgho, the Mossi King of Ouagadougou with His Personal Escort of Mossi Cavalry, Burkina Faso*. 1892.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boukary\\_Koutou,\\_also\\_known\\_as\\_Wobgho,\\_Mossi\\_King\\_of\\_Ouagadougou\\_with\\_cavalry,\\_Burkina\\_Faso,\\_1892.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boukary_Koutou,_also_known_as_Wobgho,_Mossi_King_of_Ouagadougou_with_cavalry,_Burkina_Faso,_1892.jpg)

<sup>12</sup> "Burkina Faso". *Smoke Tree Manor*. 23 October 2019. Retrieved 14 June 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Image: Labouriaux, Anthony. *Dans Un Village Du Plateau Central Du Burkina Faso, Une Troupe de Danseurs Traditionnelles*. 2010. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Troupe\\_de\\_danseurs\\_Mossi.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Troupe_de_danseurs_Mossi.jpg).

smaller, localized hierarchies in regional Mossi settlements, with a chief (*naba*) presiding over a hierarchy of officials.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning in the 11th century, the Mossi people established many disparate kingdoms throughout what is now Burkina Faso. Perhaps the most powerful of these kingdoms was Ouagadougou, located in the middle of the country. This Mossi kingdom was led by an emperor, known as the *morho naba* ("great lord"). Ouagadougou was strong enough to defeat numerous attempted invasions by the Songhai and Fulani empires.<sup>15</sup> The Fulani empire specifically proved troublesome, moving across the western part of the Sahel.<sup>16</sup> At the same time as they fought back invading forces, the kingdom established substantial commercial trade connections with other trade powers in western Africa, such as the Dyula, the Hausa, and the Asante.<sup>17</sup>



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<sup>14</sup>Mossi - Art & Life in Africa - The University of Iowa Museum of Art. Art & Life in Africa - The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art. (n.d.). <https://africa.uima.uiowa.edu/peoples/show/Mossi>.

<sup>15</sup> Dresch, J. , Deschamps, . Hubert Jules , Echenberg, . Myron and Guiguemde, . Pierre H. (2021, March 10). Burkina Faso. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Burkina-Faso>

<sup>16</sup> Mossi - Art & Life in Africa

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



## ***French Colonization in Burkina Faso (1890s - 1958)***

The Scramble for Africa was a short, but significant, time period of invasions, occupation, and colonization of African lands by seven of the largest Western European nations in the early 1890s. By this time, France had already started extending control over north, west, and central Africa. They abolished slavery and elected members to represent the Four Communes of Senegal in the French parliament. Furthermore, Africans were granted the right to vote for the French parliament; however, they were not French citizens, but rather subjects, a system that persisted until after World War II. Conquering large areas more inland throughout West Africa, France ruled the land as a part of the Senegal "military territories", and later broke the land up into independent territories. Upon reaching the land of the Mossi kingdom, multiple military standoffs between the French and Mossi warriors upon Burkinabe land.

After a standoff between the French and the Mossi ruler Samori Ture in the eastern and western regions of Burkina Faso, France was able to occupy and conquer a majority of what is now Burkina Faso by 1898.<sup>18</sup> In that same year, the Franco-British Convention established the borders of Upper Volta, the predecessor of modern Burkina Faso, and after the reorganization of other French West African colonial land, its colonial capital was established in Bamako in 1904.

## ***The Volta-Bani War and French Upper Volta***

A major turning point in colonial history, the Volta-Bani War involved a coalition of indigenous African forces, such as the Mossi and Fulani peoples, rising against the French Army.<sup>19</sup> Fighting lasted from 1915 to 1916, taking place throughout what is now eastern Mali and western Burkina Faso. The war resulted in a victory for the French side, but not without major setbacks<sup>20</sup>. The Volta-Bani War was significant in the armed opposition of the African peoples, and led to the creation of

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<sup>18</sup> Rupley, Lawrence; Bangali, Lamissa & Diamitani, Boureima (2013). *Historical Dictionary of Burkina Faso*. The Scarecrow Press. ISBN 978-0-8108-6770-3.

<sup>19</sup> Image: Petrulis, A. (n.d.). *Belligerents and Participants in World War One: French West Africa*. MetroPostcard Guide to French West Africa in World War One on postcards. <http://www.metropostcard.com/war7b-westafrica.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Chafer, Tony (2005). "Review: West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anticolonial War" (PDF). *African Studies Quarterly* (Book review). VIII (2). ISSN 2152-2448. Retrieved 15 June 2021.

French Upper Volta on March 1st, 1919, which consists of upper Senegal, Niger, and Ivory Coast. As a result, Upper Volta, now known as Burkina Faso, was separated from French Upper Volta.<sup>21</sup>

After experiencing a stagnation in cotton revenue, French Upper Volta was split between French Ivory Coast, French Sudan, and Niger. Following the end of World War II, France revived Upper Volta with the same territory and boundaries it had prior to the split up. In addition, the 1945 French Provisional Government allowed for the addition of ten seats to represent French West Africa in the Constituent Assembly. These members helped create a new French Constitution for the Fourth Republic of France. Upper Volta and the Ivory Coast, were represented by Félix Houphouët-Boigny on October 21st, 1945.<sup>22</sup> After a series of territory reorganization measures right after the establishment of the French Fifth Republic, Upper Volta was declared an independent republic on December 11th, 1958, and formally achieved independence from France on August 5 1960.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Upper Volta (1958 - 1984)***

#### ***Yaméogo and the First Government of Upper Volta (1958-1966)***

The first government established in Upper Volta consisted of a president and a national assembly, with elections by universal suffrage. Upon his election in 1960, Maurice Yaméogo, the first president of Upper Volta, banned all political parties in parliament other than his own, the Voltaic Democratic Union-African Democratic Assembly (UDV-RDA).<sup>24</sup> Despite multiple attempts, led by Nazi Boni and Gérard Kango Ouédraogo, to establish opposition parties, Yaméogo was able to dissolve the parties on the basis that they were unconstitutional. During Yaméogo's presidency, measures were taken in order to end the practice of chieftainship within the Country. Symbolic displays of chiefs were prohibited and payments to chiefs by the government were ended, with effects that are currently seen to this day eliminating village chiefs.<sup>25</sup> When it came to foreign affairs under Yaméogo's presidency, he had fallings out with France, as well as Côte d'Ivoire, due to a leadership conflict at

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<sup>21</sup> "Burkina Faso". *Smoke Tree Manor*. 23 October 2019. Retrieved 14 June 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Chafer, Tony (2002). *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization*. Berg. pp. 62–63. ISBN 1-85973-557-6.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Image: *Upper Volta Stamp Featuring President Maurice Yaméogo*. 1960.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yameogo\\_stamp\\_1960.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yameogo_stamp_1960.png).

<sup>25</sup> Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa*.

the “Conseil de l’Entente”, a regional cooperation forum that joined Upper Volta, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, and Dahomey. Although Yaméogo was the president of the forum, France’s representative took control of discussions and negotiations of the forum.<sup>26</sup> Yaméogo’s foreign policy was highly



shaped by his anti-communist beliefs. He was responsible for forming a coalition of moderate political leaders in Francophone Africa to oppose the progressive Casablanca Group<sup>27</sup>. Despite a growth in cotton exports and 94% of the population working in agriculture, Upper Volta’s economy was one of the lowest in the world. The arrival of French companies helped develop these rural areas, and resulted in better agricultural techniques and improvements in dietary nutrition amongst Upper Volta citizens.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, a measles epidemic broke out in April 1965 due to a vaccine shortage, and the lack of adequate resources for schools resulted in multiple student strikes.<sup>29</sup>

The fall of Yaméogo’s regime began with a labor strike on January 1st, 1966, parliament members demanded that austerity plans, draconian efforts to decrease family and chief allowances, cease. These series of protests escalated violently with the involvement of the police and a declaration of a state of emergency. Students, too, joined the protests, which grew to more than 100,000 people, and the demands for Yaméogo’s resignation soon were answered.<sup>30</sup> On January 3rd, 1966, Yaméogo was forced to resign in a coup and was immediately replaced by Lt. Col. Sangoulé Lamizana.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Lamizana and Military Coups (1966 - 1983)***

The coup of 1966 not only removed Yaméogo, but also the National Assembly. Around the time that Lamizana began his presidency, the Sahel drought and famine began devastating not only Upper Volta, but other neighboring countries as well. Little was done by Lamizana’s administration to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Alain Foka, " Maurice Yaméogo " In *Archives d'Afrique* (émission radiophonique de RFI), 2<sup>e</sup> partie, 18 May 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Historycentral. (2006). BURKINA FASO Retrieved June 24, 2021. Archived from the original on 2006-03-27.



address the drought and resulting famine. President Lamizana was overthrown by a military coup led by Col. Saye Zerbo on November 25th, 1980. The new president immediately suspended the 1977 constitution that was ratified during Lamizana's presidency. It wouldn't be much longer until Colonel Zerbo was overthrown by Maj. Dr. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo during the 1982 Upper Volta coup d'état.<sup>32</sup> Taking a similar approach to former president Yaméogo's political agenda, President Ouédraogo and his Council of Popular Salvation banned rival political parties and organizations, while continuing to make promises for a fully civilian-ruled government.<sup>33</sup>

### ***The Rise of Thomas Sankara and the 1983 Coup d'état***

Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara was born on December 21st, 1949, in southwestern French Upper Volta, where he grew up relatively privileged. Sankara's father, of partial Mossi descent, was one of a handful of African public servants employed by the colonial government. Despite Sankara's excellent performance in mathematics as a child, his Roman Catholic parents and priests urged him to attend seminary school to become a priest. Instead, Sankara joined the military after the deposition of President Yaméogo in 1966, witnessing the coup that gave rise to Lamizana. The military was seen as an opportunity for the youth to aid in the transition to a fully civilian-ruled government, as well as a financially feasible option to continue Sankara's education.<sup>34</sup>

It was during his military training and education in Ouagadougou when Sankara was first exposed to progressive and revolutionary ideologies through informal discussions about imperialism, neocolonialism, communism, and liberation movements around the world. Sankara furthered his learning on military strategy and agriculture from 1970 to 1973 in Madagascar, fought in the Upper Volta-Mali border war in 1974, then formed the secret "Communist Officers' Group" with Compaoré.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Anyangwe, Carlson (2012). *Revolutionary Overthrow of Constitutional Orders in Africa*. African Books Collective. ISBN 9789956727780.

<sup>33</sup> "Burkina Faso's history, also called Upper Volta, endured between 1960 and 1987, 6 military coups and the establishment of 3 republics". *Blaise Compaore*. Retrieved 5 July 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Harsch, Ernest (1 November 2014). *Thomas Sankara: An African Revolutionary*. Ohio University Press. p. 27. ISBN 9780821445075.

<sup>35</sup> Kasuka, Bridgette (8 February 2012). *Prominent African Leaders Since Independence*. Bankole Kamara Taylor. p. 296. ISBN 978-1-4700-4358-2.

In 1981, during President Zerbo's rule, Sankara was appointed Minister of Information, where Sankara advocated for investigative journalism and a reversal on censorship policies from his predecessors. However, in opposition to the government's anti-labour movement, Sankara resigned in 1982.<sup>36</sup>

Internal quarrels between the CSP and the newest leftist faction, led by recently appointed Prime Minister Thomas Sankara, resulted in Sankara's arrest. This further intensified the infighting, resulting in a military coup d'état under the leadership of Capt. Blaise Compaoré on August 4, 1983.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Cultural Context***

Although oral tradition is a significant outlet in preserving the history of the Burkinabè people, the popularity of literature and playwriting has made its way into Burkina Faso since the colonization era. A record of the oral history of the Mossi people was published in 1934, and Burkinabè plays have been written which blend mask-wearing ritual ceremonies with Western-style theater.<sup>38</sup> In addition, technology has played a large role in furthering access to entertainment across the country, thanks to the enthusiasm and financial support of President Sankara. One part of this was the revival of the Federation of Panafrican Filmmakers (FEPACI) in 1983, as well as establishing the FESPACO film festival. Burkina Faso's large contribution to West Africa cinema resulted in multiple TV shows and directors from FEPACI, winning international awards during Sankara's presidency.<sup>39</sup>

About 60 percent of the Burkinabè population practice Islam, including both the Sunni and Shi'a sects. The remaining population practice a variety of traditional indigenous beliefs, Roman Catholicism, and various Protestant Christian sects.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the observation of Christian and Muslim holidays in Burkina Faso, holidays commemorating Burkina Faso's independence are widely celebrated across the country. January 3rd is recognized as the anniversary of the 1966 coup d'état,

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<sup>36</sup> Harsch, *Thomas Sankara*.

<sup>37</sup> California Newsreel - THOMAS SANKARA: THE UPRIGHT MAN. (n.d.). <http://newsreel.org/nav/title.asp?tc=CN0205>.

<sup>38</sup> Salhi, Kamal (1999). *Francophone Voices*. Intellect Books. p. 37. ISBN 978-1-902454-03-0. Retrieved 8 July 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Turégano, Teresa Hoefert (2005) *African Cinema and Europe: Close-Up on Burkina Faso*, Florence: European Press Academic, ISBN 888398031X.

<sup>40</sup> International Religious Freedom Report 2007: Burkina Faso. United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

August 4th is Revolution Day, which celebrates the transition from Upper Volta to independent Burkina Faso, and August 5th is Burkina Faso's Independence Day.<sup>41</sup>

## ***Science and Technology***

### Agriculture

According to a report on Burkina Faso's agricultural techniques, an increase in AWM (Agricultural Water Management) techniques have heightened crop yields by nearly 100%, improved soil quality by reducing runoff, and improved groundwater levels.<sup>42</sup> These AWM techniques, which were implemented around 1980, include the development of small reservoirs, small electric/diesel pumps for smallholder irrigation, and soil and water conservation.<sup>43</sup> AWM techniques may also be linked to the "greening of the Sahel," an essential aspect of combating desertification (see Geography and Climate section for more information about desertification and initiatives taken to prevent it).<sup>44</sup> Several AWM techniques that have been implemented in Burkina Faso thus far are planting drought-resistant crops, rotational grazing, and capturing and storing water.

### Medicine

Under Sankara, a mass vaccination program called Vaccine Commando has been launched, leading to the inoculation of over 1 million children in just 3 weeks. These children were vaccinated against measles, yellow fever, and meningitis. Accordingly, infant and child vaccine coverage for these diseases has increased from 19% to 77%. An essential part of this program was the launch of a publicity and communications campaign encouraging citizens to get vaccinated. As part of this campaign Committees for Defense of the Revolution held local meetings to explain the importance

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<sup>41</sup> "Burkina Faso Public Holidays 2008". World Travel Guide. Archived from the original on 2008-05-31.

<sup>42</sup> Joanne Morris and Jennie Baron, "Agricultural Water Management Technology Expansion and Impact on Crop Yields in Northern Burkina Faso (1980-2010): A Review." *CGIAR Challenge Program on Water and Food*, (2014): p. 17, accessed July 3, 2021, <https://mediamanager.sei.org/documents/Publications/sei-report-morris-barron-cpwf-awm-in-burkina-faso.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

of vaccination to their communities. Additional communication efforts were established, including posters, leaflets, songs, and even a traveling theater group.<sup>45</sup>

## Education

The University of Ouagadougou was founded in 1969, and has institutes in numerous sciences and technology, including the health sciences. Additionally, a 14-nation school of engineering was founded in 1968, also in Ouagadougou, and an international institute of medicine was founded in 1960, focusing on combating disease, improving nutrition, and training medical practitioners from numerous African nations.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> No authors listed, "Vaccination commando: Burkina Faso." *Salubritas* vol. 8,4 (1985), accessed July 3, 2021, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12340574/>

<sup>46</sup> "Burkina Faso - Science and technology." Nations Encyclopedia, retrieved 8 July 2021, <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Africa/Burkina-Faso-SCIENCE-AND-TECHNOLOGY.html>

## Current Situation

### ***Domestic Issues***

#### Women's Rights

As Sankara begins his tenure as leader of Burkina Faso, African women currently do not hold significant power and status in society. In Burkina Faso, women have not historically held positions of power in the government, nor have they been members of the military. In addition to their lack of career status, women continue to face difficulty in domestic life, with many subject to forced marriages and unable to work outside of the home. Additionally, pregnancy proves to be a barrier to education and work for women, with many dropping out of school during their pregnancies.<sup>47</sup> Finally, women's groups and local media sources in Burkina Faso have recently begun to discuss the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) and its harmful effects on women.<sup>48</sup>

Sankara acknowledges that women must have a place in the revolution, stating in a speech that "though our men have already reached the edges of this great garden that is the revolution, our women are still confined to a depersonalizing darkness. [...] The revolution's promises are already a reality for men, But for women, they are still merely a rumor. And yet the authenticity and the future of our revolution depend on women."<sup>49</sup> It remains to be seen how Sankara will live up to this ambitious rhetoric, and how he will approach women's rights in Burkina Faso.

#### Climate

As mentioned in earlier sections, Burkina Faso's location makes the climate a central issue in the country, and one that intersects with many economic concerns. For example, as desertification increases, water supply decreases, and soil used for agriculture begins to degrade. As a result, food

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<sup>47</sup>California newsreel - Thomas SANKARA: The upright man. (n.d.).

<sup>48</sup>O'Donnell, C. K. and M. (2021, August 18). *To help make zero tolerance of fgm a reality, look to legal reform*. Center For Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/help-make-zero-tolerance-fgm-reality-look-legal-reform>.

<sup>49</sup>Sankara, Thomas. *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 2007.

shortages are a likely possibility.<sup>50</sup> Sankara has made it clear that climate issues do not exist in a vacuum, and are inherently tied to Burkina Faso's other struggles, including colonialism and economic attitudes of the people. He said of the subject:

"Our struggle to defend the trees and the forest is first and foremost a democratic struggle that must be waged by the people. The sterile and expensive excitement of a handful of engineers and forestry experts will accomplish nothing! Nor can the tender consciences of a multitude of forums and institutions – sincere and praiseworthy though they may be – make the Sahel free again, when we lack the funds to drill wells for drinking water just a hundred meters deep, and money abounds to drill oil wells three thousand meters deep!"<sup>51</sup>

As the climate increasingly changes and the desert creeps closer, Sankara's government must contend with the potential economic fallout of environmental challenges, and must learn how to feed their people with relatively dry, infertile lands, all while embracing Sankara's bold words.

### Economy

Though Sankara has already taken power, not everyone is as enthusiastic about his reforms as he wishes they were. In a rally at Ouagadougou, Sankara recently warned about the anti-revolutionary sentiment in his country, saying:

"The enemies of the people here inside the country are all those who have illicitly taken advantage of their social position and their place in the bureaucracy to enrich themselves. By means of bribery, manoeuvres, and forged documents, they have become shareholders in different companies. [...] they are that group of bourgeois who enrich themselves dishonestly through fraud and bribery, through the corruption of state officials, so that they can bring all kinds of products into Upper Volta, increasing the price tenfold. They are the enemies of the people."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Simoncelli, Marco, "Burkina Faso, the people fighting desertification to save their land," Lifegate. Retrieved June 16, 2021. <https://www.lifegate.com/burkina-faso-reportage-desertification>

<sup>51</sup> *Revisiting Thomas Sankara, 26 years later: Pambazuka News*. Revisiting Thomas Sankara, 26 years later | Pambazuka News. (n.d.). <https://www.pambazuka.org/pan-africanism/revisiting-thomas-sankara-26-years-later>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Sankara's words reveal the tension between those who support leftist economic reform, and those who do not. How will the government contend with forces pushing against Sankara's revolutionary agenda? Will the National Council for the Revolution bend, becoming more moderate in order to unite Burkina Faso? Or will it break under conflicting demands from the country's people?

Another pressing economic issue, one that intersects with foreign policy, is debt. After years of colonialism, Burkina Faso still owes a significant debt to European colonizing nations such as France. In his own words, Sankara notes that his country has been indebted for "50, 60 years and even more. That means we have been led to compromise our people for 50 years and more."<sup>53</sup> Though Sankara has made clear his aversion to paying back debt to colonizing countries, the National Council for the Revolution must decide what to do for themselves. Without paying these debts, it may be almost impossible to build up a brand new nation with more resources given by wealthy nations in the West. Will economic solutions ignore the debt, seek to pay it back, or something else altogether?

### ***Foreign Policy Concerns***

#### General Philosophy

In Sankara's own words, his philosophy of foreign affairs is one of "mutual non-aggression," "non-interference in domestic affairs," and a respect of "each other's independence, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty". These guiding principles inform the way in which Sankara intends to interact with countries involved in the Cold War, imperialist forces in the West, and other African nations. Additionally important to note is Burkina Faso's increased role in the international community under Sankara's leadership. In late 1983, Burkina Faso was elected as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council for two years. At the same time, Sankara was elected as the president of the CEAO (Economic Community of West Africa), a role which he will fill for one year..

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Because of these high prominence positions, Burkina Faso has become increasingly visible on the international stage.<sup>54</sup>

### Cold War

Sankara's approach to international relations is grounded in a policy of non-alignment. During the Cold War, this policy is of specific importance.<sup>55</sup> Sankara believes that nations should be able to form relations with others without outside repercussions. Thus, he has formed relations with states such as Libya, North Korea, Cuba, and Nicaragua, which has drawn suspicion from Western nations. To Sankara, it matters not if a country is communist, socialist, or capitalist. Rather, as he said in an interview, the real question is whether or not a nation "considered Africa as its hunting grounds, their closed field, their market, where they unload whatever garbage in order to exploit our sub-soil, our territory." Thus, to Sankara, any country could potentially try to exploit Africa, no matter their political or economic association. Similarly any country could be a friend to African nations.<sup>56</sup> This non-alignment policy allows Sankara a great degree of ideological flexibility. Though he considers himself a revolutionary and progressive, he is open to working with socialist countries and capitalist ones alike.<sup>57</sup>

### Anti-Imperialism

Though Burkina Faso has become independent from its colonizing nation, France, it is still financially dependent on the latter even now. France is Burkina Faso's largest aid donor, sending around \$55 million US dollars in economic aid to the former colony. This sum constitutes 40% of Burkina Faso's yearly budget. Additionally, Burkina Faso is deep in debt to France, owing about \$155 million.<sup>58</sup> Beyond foreign aid from Western nations such as France and the US, Burkina Faso's economy is also constrained by the policies of the IMF and the World Bank, which has trapped many African nations in debt.<sup>59</sup> Though Sankara has acknowledged his nation's dependence on foreign aid, he intends to

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<sup>54</sup> Fall, Aziz Salmone. *A Certain Amount of Madness: The Life, Politics and Legacies of Thomas Sankara*. Edited by Murrey Amber. London: Pluto Press, 2018. Accessed July 11, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt21kk235. p. 36

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 37

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 38

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, p. 43

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 52



actively work to decrease it. Of imperialist nations he said: "they would rather give us a sack of food than the money we need to become independent. They want us to remain dependent on them."<sup>60</sup>

### Pan-Africanism

Sankara is known for being a Pan-Africanist, he recognizes the similarities between the struggles of the Burkinabè people and those of other African peoples<sup>61</sup>. One reason for this transnational solidarity is the near-universal experience of colonialism in Africa. Like Burkina Faso, many African nations have been colonized by European powers. Additionally, these European states still exert control over their former colonies, often through neocolonialist economic lending/aid programs. By Sankara's time, anti-colonialism and anti-neocolonialism have become rallying points for many leaders and people throughout Africa, including, of course, Sankara himself.<sup>62</sup>

Throughout his life, Sankara has worked to counteract a rampant sense of Afro-pessimism, which is a negative portrayal of Africa and the path towards government and societal development. Such narratives were prominent in many Western nations, including France.<sup>63</sup> To fight back against these narratives, Sankara believes in promoting Afro-centric philosophies, African identity, and solidarity through his speeches and policy projects. A clear example of Sankara's anti-colonialism and Afro-centrism is his decision to change the name of his nation from the French imposed Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, a combination of one Mòoré and one Dyula word.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Sankara has urged other African leaders to ignore the debts they owed to European nations, attempting to unite African nations against neocolonialism<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> Cowell, A. (1985, January 9). *AFRICA'S 'upright People': Still no clear answers*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/01/09/world/africa-s-upright-people-still-no-clear-answers.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Fall, Aziz Salmone. *A Certain Amount of Madness: The Life, Politics and Legacies of Thomas Sankara*. Edited by Murrey Amber. London: Pluto Press, 2018. Accessed July 11, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt21kk235. p. 195

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p. 196

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p. 20

<sup>64</sup> *Burkina Faso*. Wiktionary. (n.d.). [https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Burkina\\_Faso](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Burkina_Faso).

<sup>65</sup> Fall, Aziz Salmone. *A Certain Amount of Madness: The Life, Politics and Legacies of Thomas Sankara*. Edited by Murrey Amber. London: Pluto Press, 2018. Accessed July 11, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt21kk235. p. 203

Despite his reputation as a Pan-African leader, Sankara is not afraid to challenge the status quo of other African leaders. His main African rival is the Ivorian President, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a supporter of French neocolonialism in West Africa.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 37

## Character Biographies

### **1. *Captain Blaise Compaoré - Minister of the State***

In school, Blaise's teachers always reported that he was the most disciplined of his classmates, keeping the class in order even as a 7 year old boy. Naturally, as he grew older, he gained increasingly more responsibility in school, and was eventually called upon to join the military of Upper Volta. He thrived as a service member and followed every order "to a T" while still making good friends with his fellow soldiers. Everyone's favorite, Blaise seemed as though he had found his calling in life.

That's why everyone was so shocked when he rebelled against it all, joining the 1983 coup that brought Sankara to power. Blaise had hoped that he would take the top position as Burkina Faso's leader, but tried to make peace with Sankara's leadership. He did well in his position as Minister of State, but felt an unending need for power, and was increasingly embarrassed when told what to do by Sankara. Thus, Blaise feels stuck between his allegiance to the nation and his own fiery political ambitions.

### **2. *Dayo Bakary - Minister of the Treasury***

Working barley fields alongside his widowed mother and younger sisters in the Nouna province, Dayo Bakary learned to trace the acreage of what little they had in crop fields and shave off their yield so as to avoid the excessively levied taxes. Bakary would barter and trade that set-aside yield with the local artisans in his village and, in the process, became enamored with their engagement with radical movements in communist Cuba. Equipped with a desire to escape his family's desperate situation, an appreciation for western merchant customs, and extra funds from bartering, Bakary studied at Université Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin. Receiving an invitation through connections made through merchant-friends, he scored well on his exams and made his destination the Ministry of the Treasury with his knowledge of potential sources for economic socialist reform.

As Minister of the Treasury, Bakary is in charge of the census, finances, land policies, and taxation. With his 5000-person team of census gatherers, land surveyors, and tax collectors, Bakary intends to

bolster Burkina Faso by centralizing its agricultural output, establishing more trading centers, and redirecting tax revenues for industrializing projects. He advocates for a Burkina Faso that is not only more integrated in communist values, but streamlined in its ability to levy taxes in assistance of its poorest of farmers and workers. To those ends, Bakary seeks to incorporate merchant engagement and influence across Africa as a means to strengthen both the agricultural and industrial bases of Burkina Faso.

### **3. *Major Jean-Baptiste Lingani - Minister of the Defense***

Jean-Baptiste grew up playing chess. He loved the strategy and technique to it, and was always 5 moves ahead of his opponents. His skills as a child were noticeable, and his family raised money so that he could travel to France to compete in a chess tournament. After winning the top prize, he realized that, no matter his career, he would always be 5 moves ahead of those around him, and could use chess strategy to get what he wants. This realization eventually led him to a prestigious War Studies program at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he studied strategic military theory and made connections with classmates from all around the world.

In fact, Jean-Baptiste managed to keep in touch with his best friend in the program, a man named Drissa, even after leaving France. Drissa eventually climbed the ranks of his own home country's military, and went on to become Côte d'Ivoire's Defense Minister. With strong connections to a neighboring country and the ability to move troops as he sees fit, Jean-Baptiste holds significant power in Burkina Faso, and will surely be playing 4D chess in his mind during cabinet meetings.

### **4. *Aristide Dagano - Minister of Revolutionary Progress***

When Sankara came into power, he had to ensure that the passion and radicalism of his first few months leading the country wouldn't disappear or be sabotaged by members of the population. Thus, he created the Ministry of Revolutionary Progress, and appointed Aristide Dagano to lead it. As minister, Aristide holds vast power. He can issue search and arrest warrants, send forces anywhere in the country to investigate counterrevolutionary activity, and can take action against them. Emboldened by how much power his position affords him, Aristide hopes to expand the responsibilities of the Ministry of Revolutionary Progress, and has even begun to put together a

group of spies in an organization called the BIA, the Burkinabé Intelligence Agency. These spies essentially act as a private clandestine army for Aristide, and will do his bidding, whatever it may be.

### **5. *Akua Germain - Minister of Revolutionary Justice***

As Minister of Revolutionary Justice, Germain leads the entire court system of Burkina Faso, including the Popular Revolutionary Tribunals. She's always been passionate about justice's relationship with Marxist ideals, and was absolutely thrilled when Sankara asked her to step up and defend the people of Burkina Faso from any source of injustice. However, she often feels unsure that she's doing the right thing. After all, Burkina Faso is a young nation, still establishing its place in the world *and* its internal structure. She remembers the years of turmoil and coups leading up to Sankara's tenure, and never wants that to happen to her beloved country again. Her goal, then, is to create a government built upon Sankara's Marxist ideals but with institutions stronger than any one leader. Though she's still figuring out exactly how to accomplish this — a constitution? Something different altogether? — it guides all of her work. With the power of the courts and the people within them behind her, she knows that nothing can stop her.

### **6. *Captain Kaboré Issoufou - Minister of the Interior***

Rising to the level of Minister of the Interior is not a feat that is easily obtained despite being younger and having a lower rank in comparison to the government of the French Upper Volta. Requisites require a strong background academically accompanied by a thorough check of both character and the family. Such extensive measures came with the final precursor of passing the university examinations due to the rising popularity of this office that equated both status and wealth if performed correctly. Classically trained, Kaboré Issoufou is both cunning and swift to win favor in the government offices.

Keeping a keen eye on those around them is the central focal point of this job to avoid corruption, scandal, and inefficiency. The constant monitoring factors into the amplification of morals for the public and highlighting the values of communist ideals to instill the proper way of living for Burkinabe. Any and all complaints such as these will align to Issoufou needing to address this grievance. Yet, this comes at the price of being both loved and hated where status and relationships

are the defining factor to one's pathway to becoming closer to the presidency and garnering more favor. Working alongside the Minister of the State, questioning the legitimacy of Sankara is a difficult but necessary task. Burdened with the task of watching thirty independent officials, be wary of potential individuals eager to acquire status and advance socially through flattery, bribery, and more, as this is the largest ministerial department and holds the most seniority.

### ***7. Aicha Kouakou - Minister of Agriculture***

As a young farmhand, Kouakou spent all her days harvesting maize. When she slept at night, she dreamed of her crops. Soon, her passions grew larger than her family's small, increasingly infertile plot of land, and she began to teach herself the science of soil pH and the newest, most avant-garde harvesting techniques. Her parents soon recognized her talent, and eventually collected funds to send her to Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. There, she developed an intimate — if tumultuous — relationship with He Kang, who as of 1983 has just been appointed China's minister of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Fisheries. They would stay up late through the night together, walking the streets of Beijing, debating the best conditions in which to grow cotton. Eventually, their conversations became political, and He shared his beliefs with Kouakou, telling her Mao's ideas about the power of peasants and land reform. When she finally returned home to Burkina Faso, Kouakou brought with her not only better techniques for keeping soil fertile, but also a deep passion for land reform and the plight of poor farmers. With her connections to powerful Chinese officials and her excitement to bring peasants together, Kouakou is sure to go far.

### ***8. Malo Yacouba - Minister of Infrastructure***

Malo Yacouba was always fascinated with learning about classical subjects, as well as communist texts from his grandfather's collection of books. However, growing up with working class parents proved to be a challenge for Yacouba to go to school. Nevertheless, Yacouba worked in his father's carpentry business to gain the funds necessary to start school. Quickly, he worked harder than ever to qualify for the college admission examinations. Yacouba's efforts landed him first in the rankings of his graduating class at the University of Ouagadougou. He then was appointed Assistant Minister of Infrastructure and later on, as Minister of Infrastructure.

As the Minister of Infrastructure, Yacouba oversees various projects, such as a new land ownership system and transportation. Yacouba is constantly inspired by vast railroad systems and electric plants in multiple urban centers. Furthermore, having been a high-ranking scholar, Yacouba seeks to preserve communist texts and classical subjects that he had learned in his youth. However, Yacouba believes that there should be a transformation in education to better establish an equal working class. In the same light, Yacouba wishes to make Burkina Faso an everlasting communist regime.

#### **9. *Lieutenant Bayala Alain - Minister of Trade***

Born on a cargo ship, Bayalo Alain learned the value of the unique goods that West Africa can offer to other countries of the continent. Alain's father was a ship attendant, ensuring that all cargo to and from Burkina Faso was adequately stored in the boat. However, a fateful night would cause a terrible injury for Alain's father, caused by the French captain's lack of concern for the safety of the African workers on staff. From this day on, Alain was filled with rage at how the Western countries disregarded their workers' safety and cared little about the unique products that the Burkinabe make with great passion and care.

A pressing matter in Sankara's agenda is that of keeping Western goods outside of Burkina Faso. Therefore, as the Minister of Trade, Bayala Alain seeks to accomplish bettering the Burkina Faso economy through engaging in trade with other West African countries. Alain also advocates for gathering goods throughout the continent, such that Burkina Faso can be seen as an international trading house for African goods.

#### **10. *Cyrille Touré - Minister of Health***

Destined to follow in the footsteps of her mother, Cyrille Touré trained to become a female physician for other women. Her training took her to many of the most impoverished regions of the country, where she got to see first-hand the plight of female commoners, who were frequently inflicted with treatable ailments and diseases, such as malaria and diarrhea. She paired her burgeoning knowledge in the subjects of indigenous medicines with a sharp eye for medicinal herbs, many of which aided her in treating illnesses thought to be incurable and gaining attention from middle-class French

diplomats. Touré became disheartened at more or less the same health inequities even as her clientele increasingly became higher-statused and wealthy.

Knowing that a direct appeal for women's health concerns might land flat, she seeks for her home district of Gaoua to be the hub for medicinal advancement, as a means to attract foreign intrigue and dependency. To those ends, Touré strongly advocates for the training of more female doctors as they join the social ranks of male physicians in treating men and boys as well as women and girls. She also supports significant investment in medical research, with the creation of a Ministry of Health, into the medicinal herbs she used during her younger years. Ultimately, Touré demands that a strong Burkina Faso be built through a healthy, vaccinated population.

#### ***11. Alain Bayala - Minister of Energy***

Alain has a complicated past. As a boy, his older brother Aziz was part of a group of ambitious young men who made it their goal to do what the government couldn't. The group started off fairly innocent — picking up trash from outside people's homes, cooking for the sick — but eventually progressed to stealing money and goods from wrongdoers. However, Alain left his family's troubled past behind to study engineering. Ask him what the future will look like, and he'll talk your ear off for hours, painting a picture of Burkina Faso as a glittering nation bright with lights and culture. He imagines Ouagadougou bustling late into the night, its homes lit up with electricity, and neon signs glowing on storefront windows. Alain believes that, for Burkina Faso to be a truly modern and international nation, it must be at the forefront of energy policy. His goal is to build solar panels, wind turbines, hydroelectric power stations, and a robust energy infrastructure that will one day allow every Burkinabé full access to light, warmth, and fuel. However, to accomplish this goal, he must contend with the nation's lack of funds and pre-existing technological infrastructure. Will he do whatever it takes to get enough money to build an energy grid, including reaching out to his brother and asking for help from Burkina Faso's underground mafia?

#### ***12. Mariam Blati - Minister of Education***

Mariam Blati never took his education seriously in his childhood, but that fate would change upon taking a history course taught by his neighborhood elder, Totamya. From learning about the birth of



the African peoples to the continent's history of colonization and repression, Blati was as fired up as ever to seek change in Burkina Faso's history, such that no other Western country can create more suffering among the Burkinabe. Currently, Blati strongly advocates for educating as many young Burkinabe about how Africa's past can be informative about the possible achievements of Burkina Faso.

Knowledge is power and the Minister of Education reigns well within his domain. While the typical duties focus on overseeing the public library system and aiding in research to study the works by communist thinkers, Marian Blati also answers the questions asked by Thomas Sankara. Aided by a Deputy Minister of Education to help run the Office of Special Advisors, the philosophy taught by Blati was equivalent to divine providence. Blati is an idealist, hoping to bring Burkina Faso to a near utopian status. While proficient in theory, Blati's only weakness is putting his grand ideas into practice.

### ***13. Lieutenant Samira Daouda - Minister of Culture***

Samira Daouda was born in Banfora and was raised by a family of artists and businessmen. More specifically, his father had an art studio, taking in requests for the French elite families throughout Daouda's childhood. Later, Daouda's interest in communism led him to live decades upon the readings of Marx. Having been a scholar on socialist thought in his youth and young adulthood, Daouda is very educated in the literature and movements revolving around communism. After the death of his father, Daouda was forced to take over his father's art supplies, where he learned the basics of clay ceramics and landscape art. Over the years, Daouda's art caught the eyes of Sankara himself, and he has sold him many pieces of art.

As the Minister of Culture, Daouda oversees the rituals and culture in Burkina Faso to preserve the "Africanist" vision of Sankara's country. Given their past occupation as an artist, Daouda is passionate about the move towards realism paintings derived from traditional Soviet styles of landscapes and the preservation of clay artwork from indigenous tribes. Therefore, Daouda strives for the preservation of Burkinabe and Soviet paintings, ceramics, and communist literature. Given the birth of a new nation and an increased interest in the communist thought within the country, Daouda is determined to ensure that these art forms do not disappear as a result of Westernized

influence. In addition, Daouda seeks to bring peace amidst the tensions between communist and capitalist ideals through a shared appreciation of the indigenous arts.

#### ***14. Taner Baongo - Minister of Youth, Training, and Professional Evolution***

Taner can be found in the exact same place every morning — sitting on a cushion with a bowl of warm breakfast porridge, watching a soccer match. His wife has always laughed at his boyish love for the sport, but secretly finds it sweet that he is so passionate about it. After this morning routine, Taner typically tends to some chores around the house and then heads off to coach a youth soccer league and referee some games in between his work as Burkina Faso's Minister of Youth, Training, and Professional Evolution.

Taner's plan for the professional development of young Burkinabé revolves around — you guessed it — soccer. He wants to establish teams all across Burkina Faso, and use the sport to teach young people discipline, teamwork, and sportsmanship. Additionally, he envisions a future where teams travel internationally, and use soccer to make connections between nations, furthering Burkina Faso's place in Africa and the world.

#### ***15. Fatimata Kabore - Minister of Women and Gender Equality***

Growing up in a family of salt miners meant that Fatimata Kabore's childhood consisted little of a proper education. Kabore would always see the young boys taking the path to school every morning as she made her long journey to the mines with her older brother and parents. She always yearned to be in a position where she can receive the best education so that she can bring her parents out of poverty and move into a big city. Unfortunately, this was not possible because both of her parents died in an explosion within the mines, leaving Kabore and her brother to fend for themselves in their village. Then, her brother sought a job opportunity to clean at a local elementary school, stealing some books for his younger sister to read. Ever since, Kabore grew up on these books throughout her childhood and adolescence, earning her the ability to attend university with a scholarship, wishing to give back and advocate for more women to be involved in education.

As Minister of Women and Gender Equality, Kabore strongly believes that education is not the only issue at hand. When it comes to seeking out equality, the labor sector also lacks professional women in government, science, and healthcare. In addition, the strict cultural norms which confine women to their homes is something that Kabore seeks to find common ground, especially with the Mossi people. Kabore aims to fulfill all of these issues, while also keeping in mind the socialist values on Sankara's agenda.

#### **16. Moussa Sore - Minister of Labor**

Moussa Sore grew up in a middle class family in the capital, since his father was a reputable economics scholar and teacher. Following in the footsteps of her father, Sore always wanted to become a teacher for students who wished to study economics. After being privately tutored by his father's teacher colleagues, Sore travelled throughout Burkina Faso to find inspiration for his concentration of studies. Unknowingly, his trip resulted in a realization of the inequities of labor amongst lower-class and non-French citizens. Sore felt a great determination to ensure that education was equitable and accessible to all.

As a Minister of Labor, Sore greatly values the utilization of the Volta River for water access and transporting Western goods across the country. Sore strongly advocates for creating a repetitional international trade capital in West Africa. Some of the popular exports include salt, millet, and barley. Sore seeks to find ways to reach out to other countries to take interest in these exports outside of West Africa.

#### **17. Darifa Kabre - Minister of Tribal Relations**

Darifa grew up in a home and neighborhood that was full of many different cultures. Her mother was of Mossi descent, and was raised under Mossi tribal hierarchy. Darifa's father was a well-off merchant of Dyula heritage. Her passion as a child was cooking, and she first gained fame by putting out numerous cookbooks celebrating Mossi and Dyula culinary techniques. At the age of 30, she opened her own restaurant in Ouagadougou that served a modern interpretation of classic Mossi dishes such as *sagabo*, a porridge made with millet. Her restaurant always saw a steady crowd of customers who traveled all across West Africa to eat her food. As such, Darifa came to be connected

with tribal leaders and communities far outside of her hometown and the capital city. When Sankara came to power, he called upon her to help unite the nation, despite its tribal divides and history. Bringing a love for her people and for tribal communities across Burkina Faso, Darifa is excited to take office and decrease divisions between ethnic groups.

### ***18. Seydou Belem - Minister of Science***

You ever heard of STEM? That was this guy. Seydou invented STEM. When Seydou was a freshman at the University of Ouagadougou, he completed the Science major the March of his freshman year. For his next trick, he added a Technology major and completed that before his sophomore winter break. Undeterred, Seydou completed Engineering AND Mathematics majors—quadruple majoring in time to graduate in only 3 years. His quadruple major in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math led other students to call him by the nickname “Mr. STEM,” and it is believed that the acronym spread from Ouagadougou to become the global phenomenon it is today. After graduation, Seydou went on to become the first Burkinabé on a Soviet space mission... and then the first Burkinabé on a NASA space mission. When Seydou isn’t saving the astronauts from space junk, he is working to get Burkinabé youth coding with his nonprofit CODE RED. While many of Sankara’s supporters believe that technology is inherently neoliberal, Belem believes that technology and automation hold the keys to workers’ liberation by eliminating the need for the exploitation of human labor.

### ***19. Kadidia Bamogo - Minister of Urban Affairs***

One of the largest ministerial bodies of Burkina Faso, no day is easy as a major executive body. The constant threat of war and keeping civil unrest at bay is a constant worry that Kadidia Bamogo has to focus on. Accompanied by a Deputy Minister of the second rank and a Secretary, the delegation of tasks became easier to swallow despite the growing distrust amongst the Ministries that attempted to control the office and its influence. Yet, these worries are compensated with the high status and influence carried as being one of the large ministerial bodies. Bamogo holds the ability to command the civil architectures, engineers, and contractors as the leader of infrastructure for the country and Sankara.

## **20. *Pierre Ganame - Minister of Rural Affairs***

Pierre Ganame comes from a reputable family of farmers within his small village in southwestern Burkina Faso. Son of a French farmer and a Mossi seamstress, Ganame sought to fulfill the legacy that their family has for successfully reaping the most maize and millet. Having identified the best methods of rotating crop planting based on the season during his adolescence, Ganame was inspired to share how other farmers can see better yields to their crops and prevent droughts in their villages. As Minister of Rural Affairs, Ganame oversees the regulation of farming practices across Burkina Faso, ensuring that yields of certain crops are established during the fall and spring months. With Sankara's current message on combating desertification, Ganame wishes to collaborate with Burkinabe researchers on what new agricultural water management technologies can be implemented for wider access to produce in the most arid of locations.

## **21. *Noufou Dah - Minister of Environment and Climate***

"Get your head out of those books and live in the real world, Noufou!" If Noufou Dah had a dollar for every time he heard those exact words, he'd have at least 4 dollars, which he thinks is quite a significant amount. It's true — he spent all his free minutes growing up reading science fiction novels set on sandy, arid planets. He became lost in the characters and the worldbuilding, and felt that he could almost reach out and touch those fictional cities with their skyscrapers and overflowing garden oases. He imagined himself and his people in those books. After all, who said Africa couldn't be the site of innovation, science, and utopia? As he grew older, he realized that he didn't have to abandon those fictional worlds at all to "live in the real world." He threw himself into organizing work, meeting local farmers to discuss innovative strategies to combat desertification, bringing together urban activists with rural ones, creating networks of artists, botanists, architects, and more. Eventually, with this coalition behind him, Noufou put a name to his vision for the future: Afrofuturist solarpunk. With those guiding words, Noufou sets out to transform his home country, always looking ahead toward a green future.

## **22. *Elodie Cisse - Minister of Transport***

Elodie Cisse's village has been known as "the land which knows no roads", in which access to nearby towns to access food, clothing, and other necessities is rather difficult, especially when a desert storm is passing by. Having completed an apprenticeship after high school at an auto factory in the Ivory Coast, Cisse seeks to accommodate distant villages through a vast system of highways and roads. In addition, Cisse believes that Burkina Faso has great potential to set up auto factories, such that there is even less dependency from Western countries for their automobiles. As Minister of Transport, Cisse strongly advocates for educating young people to drive, starting in their high school years, which can help boost job opportunities in transportation and infrastructure.

## **23. *Abdoulaye Lankoande - Minister of French Relations***

Abdoulaye Lankoande did not have a normal life. His father, being a Jesuit priest, was known for his studies in demonology and the occult. Lankoande was a very bright young man and gained entrance into École des Langues Orientales Vivantes, a very prestigious school, where he took up Medieval Studies. He knew he wanted to be a diplomat, oddly enough, but the road to being a high ranking diplomat was hard. His first stationing in Mali prevented him for 6 years from taking an exam to move positions. He finally was able to take the exam and returned to France as a consul second class. He was then promoted to the consul of Burkina Faso, oversaw a fleet during the coup of 1966, and became the Officer of the Legion of Honor. During this period, Abdoulaye visited Burkina Faso for the first time. He became the first Burkinabe consul to France. This relationship opened up many doors for both nations.

Lankoande became enamored in Burkina Faso. Spending many years in Boulsa, he started collecting pieces of art and antiques throughout the country. This helped others gain more respect for the thing being created in West Africa. His time in West Africa was not just about the finer things; Lankoande was still there to do his diplomatic job.

#### ***24. Madina Yonli - Minister of African Relations***

Madina Yonli always felt at home wherever he traveled within Dori. As the daughter of the province judge, Yonli was always accustomed to traveling to the various villages that his father went to in order to enforce the law. Madina and her father always made time to learn more about the law, to which this passion grew into Yonli's interest to enforce the law and follow in the footsteps of her father. After attending college for many grueling years to qualify for a government position Madina received the invitation to take an admissions exam. Unfortunately, the many coups of the previous presidencies resulted in many Burkinabe families having to arm themselves to defend themselves and their villages from the dangers of rebels and French forces. After the coup led by Thomas Sankara, Madina felt more compelled than ever to represent Burkina Faso at the international community in order to address his concerns about the after effects of French colonization.

As a representative of the province, Yonli strongly advocates for building strong diplomatic relations with its neighbors Mali, Ivory Coast, and Ghana. Yonli is also seeking to fulfill the ambitious goal of creating a pan-African community, one that Sankara currently envisions as the next step for international relations with Burkina Faso.

#### ***25. Idrissa Ouedraogo - Commander-in-Chief of the Popular Armed Forces***

Being glued to the television set as a young boy, admiring the story of the Russian Revolution, Idrissa Ouedraogo sought to also lead an army of people towards bettering Burkina Faso towards an idolized African nation. Despite coming from a background of peaceful Catholic ministers, Ouedraogo sought to accomplish a more "rebellious" lifestyle by participating in the JROTC program in Ouagadougou. He also joined the crowds that formed by the President's Mansion coup after coup after coup. To Ouedraogo, rebellion was indeed a part of a patriotic display to honor the ancestors before him who had shed blood against the French a century ago. During his years in the army academy, he was a devout student of weaponry, admiring the new technology being implemented within the military.

As the Commander-in-Chief of the Popular Armed Forces, Ouedraogo believes that there is no other hot button issue than to progress the revolution that Sankara began when he assumed office by

recruiting many Burkinabe to take up arms. He also strongly advocates for controlling all weapons in Burkina Faso under his command, stripping away any military weapons from those who are not approved by his office.



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