

# FMSO's Military DIME (M-DIME) Research Project

*Tracking Russian and Chinese military influence in states around the world*

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## Instruments of Russian Military Influence in Burkina Faso

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January 2024

U.S. Army  
Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO)  
Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) G2

## OVERVIEW OF FMSO'S M-DIME RESEARCH PROJECT

The Military DIME (M-DIME) Research Project is a dynamic effort from researchers at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO). Its goal is to provide Army leaders with a clear, comparative understanding of how China and Russia employ instruments of national power to obtain military influence around the world. The M-DIME framework is derived from the "DIME" concept, which classes instruments of national power into four types: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic. Based on this concept, the M-DIME framework gives more narrow attention to the instruments that China and Russia employ to gain military influence in third-party countries.

The M-DIME framework's purpose is to track and analyze the military influence of "Benefactor" countries (i.e. China and Russia) in select "Recipient" countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and South and South-east Asia. Benefactor countries are assumed to engage in activities that result in them having increased military influence in Recipient countries to gain leverage over global rivals, competitors, and adversaries; for China and Russia, this means the United States. Within this framework, "military influence" is defined as the ability of a Benefactor country to shape or alter the attitudes, behaviors, and capabilities of actors within—and entities associated with—the armed forces of Recipient countries.

**The M-DIME framework identifies 12 distinct instruments of national power employed by Benefactor countries to gain military influence in Recipient countries, three for each of the DIME categories. They are as follows:**

### DIPLOMATIC INSTRUMENTS

- D1 Defense-Related Diplomacy
- D2 International Military Education and Training
- D3 Soft Power Activities

### INFORMATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

- I1 Cultural and Media Outreach, Collaboration and Alignment
- I2 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Support
- I3 Cooperation in Military Intelligence and Communications

### MILITARY INSTRUMENTS

- M1 Formal Bilateral Military Engagements
- M2 Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements
- M3 Defense/Security Pacts and Agreements

### ECONOMIC INSTRUMENTS

- E1 Arms Transfers
- E2 Technology-Sharing and Joint Production Agreements
- E3 Trade and Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors

M-DIME analysis is based on qualitative assessments of Benefactor influence in Recipient countries along each of the 12 M-DIME instruments of influence. These assessments are made for the Benefactor's **Current Influence** (assessed as **Very High, High, Medium, Low, Very Low, or Unobserved**) and **Projected Influence** (assessed as **Increasing, Steady, Decreasing, or Unknown**). Current assessments are made based on activities from 2012 to the present, while future assessments are three-year forecasts.




The bulk of activities considered in the M-DIME Research Project involve members of the armed forces or defense sector personnel in both Benefactor and Recipient countries. Such activities include formal and informal military-to-military diplomacy, security cooperation engagements, and arms transfers. However, the M-DIME Research Project also tracks and analyzes Chinese and Russian activities that employ non-military instruments of influence but ultimately bear on the decision-making and capabilities of the Recipient country's armed forces. Such activities include Chinese and Russian collaboration with Benefactor states in media, communications technology, and strategic sectors.

The M-DIME Research Project's findings are derived from open-source research. Each M-DIME product is produced with the collaboration of analysts from across FMSO, frequently with the assistance of non-Department of Defense subject matter experts coming from academia, think tanks, and the private sector. Given its basis in open-source research, the M-DIME Research Project has an inherent limitation. It cannot track Chinese and Russian military influence activities that are deliberately kept secret. Consequently, assessments of Chinese and Russian influence based on instruments for which secrecy is important or where information would typically be classified by the Benefactor or Recipient countries—for instance, military-technology sharing or intelligence collaboration—are acknowledged to be made with low confidence. In certain cases, assessments are not made where open-source data is considered inconclusive.


In sum, the M-DIME Research Project is a tool for U.S. Army and U.S. Government personnel to better understand the instruments of national power employed by China and Russia to gain global military influence and the impact these activities have on U.S. national security interests. Over time, FMSO will expand the body of research and assessments based on this framework, increasing its comparative value across Benefactor and Recipient countries.













## KEY ASSESSMENTS

**Russia’s current M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as Medium.** Some of the most important instruments for Russia’s influence in Burkina Faso include:

- 
**Cultural and Media Outreach, Influence, and Alignment (I1).** Russian information operations have seemingly helped stoke Burkinabé public support for Russia as the countries—which share a nondemocratic governance approach and a distrust of Western states—become increasingly aligned. This illustrates how Russia continues to use disinformation and misinformation to consolidate influence and resist global isolation due to its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.
- 
**Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements (M2).** Russian private military company Wagner Group possibly operates in Burkina Faso, and Russia has both endorsed and promised training and materiel support for multilateral security initiatives in the Sahel region. Such engagements undermine regional security activities by the United States and democratic allies.
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**Arms Transfers (E1).** Russia has been Burkina Faso’s primary arms supplier since 2012, providing equipment to Burkina Faso as it seeks to address its worsening security landscape. However, Russian arms may also enable violence by the Burkinabé armed forces, which have reportedly committed extrajudicial killings and other crimes.<sup>1</sup>

**Russia’s projected M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as Steady.** The most important instrument for Russia’s future influence in Burkina Faso is:

- 
**Cultural and Media Outreach, Influence, and Alignment (I1).** Russia and Burkina Faso are becoming increasingly aligned, and recent limits on French media in Burkina Faso have created new space for Russian information operations. Increasing influence via this instrument would likely further erode democratic influence and ideals in the region.

DIPLOMATIC / INFORMATION			MILITARY / ECONOMIC		
	<b>D1</b>	Defense-Related Diplomacy		<b>M1</b>	Formal Bilateral Military Engagements
	<b>D2</b>	International Military Education and Training		<b>M2</b>	Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements
	<b>D3</b>	Soft Power Activities		<b>M3</b>	Defense/Security Pacts and Agreements
	<b>I1</b>	Cultural/Media Outreach, Collaboration, Alignment		<b>E1</b>	Arms Transfers
	<b>I2</b>	Information/Communications Technology Support		<b>E2</b>	Technology-Sharing, Joint Production Agreements
	<b>I3</b>	Cooperation in Military Intelligence/Communications		<b>E3</b>	Trade/Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors
CURRENT DEGREE OF INFLUENCE			PROJECTED FUTURE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE		
Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	None/Unobserved
			Increasing    Steady    Decreasing 		

## INTRODUCTION TO RUSSIA-BURKINA FASO MILITARY RELATIONS

Historical military ties between Burkina Faso and Russia have sometimes been more symbolic than concrete. In 1983, Thomas Sankara seized power in Upper Volta, later citing Russia's October 1917 revolution as inspiration for the renamed state of Burkina Faso.<sup>2,3</sup> The Soviet Union exported two helicopters to Burkina Faso in 1988.<sup>4</sup> This was the only identified instance of substantive Soviet military support for Burkina Faso's armed forces. Since its 1991 inception, the Russian Federation has been Burkina Faso's primary arms supplier.<sup>5</sup>

However, the most consequential era in Russian-Burkinabé relations continues to unfold. In recent years, the countries have deepened military-diplomatic ties as their geopolitical and ideological interests converge; both Ouagadougou and Moscow are non-democratic states that resent Western powers.<sup>6,7,8,9</sup> Burkinabé President Ibrahim Traoré called Russia a "strategic ally" in May 2023, and some observers speculate that Russia catalyzed the 2022 coup that installed Traoré.<sup>10,11</sup> Still, open-source research yields limited verifiable details about the nature and extent of the bilateral military relationship, including the possible presence of the Russian private military company Wagner Group in Burkina Faso. Many inside and outside the country have asserted Wagner operates in

Burkina Faso and has had "a voice" there since at least 2022, but the ruling junta formally denies this.<sup>12,13,14</sup>

According to the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy, the United States perceives Africa as a "major geopolitical force" given its rapid population growth and importance to core interests like climate change, pandemic control, and counterterrorism.<sup>15</sup> Seeking to combat terrorism in the Sahel, the United States funded, trained, and armed Burkinabé forces beginning in 2009.<sup>16</sup> The 2022 coups, however, dampened the bilateral relationship; the United States condemned these events and declined to invite Burkina Faso to last year's U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit.<sup>17,18,19</sup> Meanwhile, Russia has become increasingly isolated internationally following its invasion of Ukraine and has an interest in reinforcing its remaining relationships with ideologically similar states, including Burkina Faso. The 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy labels Moscow an "immediate and persistent threat," asserts a vital U.S. interest in deterring Russian aggression, and condemns strategies that Russia has used in Burkina Faso, including "information manipulation operations."<sup>20</sup> Countering Russian advances in Burkina Faso thus serves the U.S. goal of "security and stability" in Africa, as outlined in the 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy.<sup>21</sup>

## BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE

<b>Capital</b>	Ouagadougou
<b>Population</b>	22,489,126 (2023 estimate) <sup>22</sup>
<b>GDP per Capita</b>	\$2,200 (2021 estimate) <sup>23</sup>
<b>Head of Government</b>	Prime Minister Apollinaire Joachim Kyélem de Tambèla <sup>24</sup>
<b>Head of State</b>	Captain Ibrahim Traore <sup>25</sup>
<b>Minister of Defense</b>	Colonel Kassoum Coulibaly <sup>26</sup>
<b>Chief of General Staff</b>	Brigadier General Célestin Simporé <sup>27</sup>
<b>Military Expenditure (total)</b>	\$562.58 million (2022 estimate) <sup>28</sup>
<b>Military Expenditure (% of GDP)</b>	3.1% (2022 estimate) <sup>29</sup>
<b>Armed Service Branches</b>	<p><b>Armed Forces of Burkina Faso (FABF); a.k.a. National Armed Forces (Forces de Défense et de Sécurité or FDS):</b> Army of Burkina Faso (L'Armee de Terre, LAT), Air Force of Burkina Faso (Force Aerienne de Burkina Faso), National Gendarmerie, National Fire Brigade (Brigade Nationale de Sapeurs-Pompiers or BNSP); Homeland Defense Volunteers (Forcés de Volontaires de Défense pour la Patrie or VDP)</p> <p><b>Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Security (Forces de Défense et de Sécurité or FDS):</b> National Police (2023)<sup>30</sup></p>
<b>Active Armed Forces Personnel</b>	14,000 (2023 estimate) <sup>31</sup>

## D - Diplomatic Influence

Russia's use of diplomatic instruments to gain military influence in Burkina Faso is evident, though not especially deep. Most notably, Russia has engaged Burkina Faso in numerous "soft power" activities, including defense conventions and multilateral sporting events. However, vague, limited open-source information makes it difficult to assess Russia's use of military diplomacy and training programs to gain influence in Burkina Faso.



### D1 - Defense-Related Diplomacy

**Current Influence: Low**

**Projected Influence: Increasing**

- **Russian and Burkinabé heads of state have met twice since 2012.**
  - » In July 2023, Burkinabé President Ibrahim Traoré attended the Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg, where he met with Putin and attended a naval parade.<sup>32</sup> Analysts say that consolidating ties with Burkina Faso was a Russian "priority" at the summit.<sup>33</sup> Traoré expressed support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine during the event.<sup>34</sup>
  - » In 2019, Burkinabé President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi.<sup>35</sup> Kaboré requested regional counterterrorism help, and Putin promised assistance.<sup>36</sup>
- **Burkina Faso's prime minister and military officers visited Russia in 2022, though there are few confirmed details about this incident. Burkina Faso's defense minister also visited Russia in 2018.**
  - » In 2022, Prime Minister Apollinaire Joachim Kyélem de Tambèla visited Moscow with a delegation that included "four high-ranking military officers."<sup>37,38</sup> It does not appear they met with Putin.
  - » Russia said the 2022 visit's purpose was to "consolidate the international community's efforts in combating the terrorist threat."<sup>39</sup> This visit occurred after Wagner reportedly established influence in Burkina Faso.<sup>40</sup>
  - » In 2018, Burkina Faso's then Defense Minister, Jean-Claude Bouda, met with Russia's Defense Minister, Sergei Shoigu, at the ARMY-2018 International Military-Technical Forum near Moscow.<sup>41</sup>
- **A Russian delegation traveled to Burkina Faso for military-focused talks in 2023, and Russian defense industry executives may have visited in 2022.**
  - » In August 2023, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov led a delegation to Burkina Faso to discuss cooperation, "primarily concern[ing] the military domain," with Traoré.<sup>42</sup> Burkina Faso said this visit built on talks between Traoré and Putin at the Russia-Africa Summit.
  - » In 2022, a single social media user noted that a plane allegedly linked to Russian state-owned weapons supplier Rostec landed in Ouagadougou.<sup>43</sup> No further details or corroboration are available.
- **Russian attempts at military influence via this instrument may increase over the next three years given the flurry of military diplomacy following Traoré's takeover of the Burkinabé government.**
  - » There were at least two notable exchanges between July and August 2023, suggesting a possible uptick in security cooperation visits.<sup>44,45</sup>

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved



**D2 - International Military Education and Training**

**Current Influence: Low**

**Projected Influence: Steady**

- **Russia reportedly had educated thousands of Burkinabés in its universities and diplomatic academies by 2017. Yet, it is unclear how many—if any—of these students were from Burkina Faso’s military or other strategic sectors.**
  - » In 2017, Burkinabé and Russian officials discussed the “resumption of active cooperation in professional training” and “cooperation between our diplomatic academies.”<sup>46</sup> By that time, 3,500 Burkinabé “professionals” had graduated from Russian universities.<sup>47</sup>
- **Reported discussions about specifically military education have been vague, but Russia appears to have trained Burkinabé forces. Only anecdotal evidence is available about the volume, frequency, and specific types of engagement.**
  - » In August 2023, Traoré and a Russian delegation discussed Burkinabé military personnel, including pilots, receiving training in Russia.<sup>48</sup>
  - » In 2022, a Burkinabé military official said that “training actions” from Russia “are continuing.”<sup>49</sup> This suggests some existing military education.
  - » In 2019, Burkinabé and Russian officials “discussed possibilities for training military specialists from Burkina Faso.”<sup>50</sup>
- **Evidence of future Russian attempts to gain influence via this instrument is mixed and is therefore projected to remain steady over the next three years.**
  - » As of April 2023, the Burkinabé junta reportedly expected Russia to send instructors to train its military.<sup>51</sup> These instructors could be from Wagner.
  - » Russian capacity to train Burkinabé forces may be limited in the near-term. The Russian military and Wagner have suffered heavy losses in Ukraine.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Wagner’s future is uncertain following the August 2023 death of its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin.<sup>53</sup>



**D3 - Soft Power Activities**

**Current Influence: Low**

**Projected Influence: Steady**

- **Russian and Burkinabé forces have participated in the same military sporting events. Yet, the routine and multilateral nature of these engagements limits Russia’s ability to consolidate influence by these means. They are thus minimally significant.**
  - » Most notably, Burkinabé personnel participated in the Russia-organized International Army Games in 2021 and 2022.<sup>54,55</sup>
  - » Additionally, in 2022, a Burkinabé delegation traveled to St. Petersburg for the 3rd International Military Sports Council World Cadet Games.<sup>56,57</sup>
  - » Burkina Faso and Russia jointly participated in other military sporting events in 2015 and 2019.<sup>58,59,60</sup>
- **Burkinabé representatives have traveled to Russia for at least three Kremlin-organized defense conventions since 2017. Though multilateral, these events have yielded significant bilateral deals between Burkina Faso and a Russian state defense company.**
  - » Burkina Faso participated in Russia’s ARMY-20XX International Military-Technical Forum near Moscow in 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2023.<sup>61,62,63,64</sup>
  - » Burkina Faso reportedly struck deals with Russian company Rosoboronexport for helicopters and air-launched weapons at the 2017 forum.<sup>65,66</sup>
- **Burkina Faso has hosted a Russian military mission and decorated Russian service members for their support. The nature and extent of this assistance is unclear.**
  - » In 2022, Burkina Faso awarded medals to two members of a Russian military mission “for the efforts they have made towards the National Armed Forces.”<sup>67</sup> The Russian mission appears to have trained Burkinabé forces.<sup>68</sup> The Burkinabé Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces was present.<sup>69</sup>
- **Russian influence via this instrument is projected to stay steady over the next three years.**
  - » The countries will likely continue participating in regular military games and the annual military-technical forum. Still, there is no evidence Russia will gain additional influence through more of these engagements.
  - » The decoration of Russian personnel appears to be a one-time event and, thus, minimally significant.



Very High High Medium Low Very Low Unobserved



# I - Informational Influence

Russia's use of informational instruments to gain militarily-relevant influence in Burkina Faso is profound in cultural and media outreach, but unobserved elsewhere. Russia has successfully influenced Burkinabé public opinion and politics through sophisticated information operations, and the states are increasingly aligned geopolitically and ideologically. No evidence of Russian attempts at gaining influence via bilateral ICT collaboration or military intelligence cooperation were observed.



## I1 - Cultural and Media Outreach, Collaboration and Alignment

**Current Influence: High**

**Projected Influence: Increasing**

- **Russia has limited official ties to Burkinabé news media, but it exerts influence via information campaigns targeting social and traditional media.**
  - » As of 2022, Russian media outlets seemingly did not operate in Burkina Faso.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, Russia's ambassador has given interviews to and visited Burkinabé media, including the state-owned broadcaster.<sup>71,72</sup>
  - » Russia has conducted information operations in the Sahel for years.<sup>73,74</sup>
  - » There has been a surge of Russia-related content in Burkinabé social and traditional media.<sup>75</sup> In 2022, a fact checker reported seeing more "pro-Russia messages" and "calls for military collaboration with Russia."<sup>76</sup>
- **Despite limited formal media arrangements, public approval of Russia is widespread in Burkina Faso.**
  - » A 2021 poll found that 50 percent of Burkinabés approved of Russian leadership, compared to 15 percent who disapproved.<sup>77</sup>
  - » A 2022 poll found that more than 80 percent of Burkinabés favored Russian counterterrorism assistance.<sup>78</sup> Notably, highly educated residents of Ouagadougou were overrepresented in this poll.
  - » Dozens of pro-Russia rallies, some involving Burkinabé soldiers, have occurred in recent years across Burkina Faso.<sup>79,80</sup>
- **Russian influence via this instrument is expected to rise over the next three years, given seemingly increasing pro-Russian sentiment in Burkina Faso, the potential re-opening of Russia's embassy in Ouagadougou, and overall increasing diplomatic alignment of the states.**
  - » As of July 2023, Russia planned to re-open its embassy in Ouagadougou.<sup>81,82</sup> This project's status is unclear.
  - » Burkina Faso's 2023 termination of military cooperation with France could further drive Burkinabé-Russian alignment.<sup>83</sup> Burkinabés appear to view Russia as an attractive alternative to France as a security partner, and Burkina Faso and Russia held military-focused talks in August 2023.<sup>84,85</sup>
  - » In late 2022 and early 2023, Burkina Faso suspended broadcasting by Radio France Internationale and France 24, creating a further opening in the media space for pro-Russia narratives.<sup>86</sup>



## I2 - Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sector Support

**Current Influence: Unobserved**

**Future Influence: Unknown**

- **There is no publicly available information about Russian attempts to bilaterally influence Burkina Faso via this instrument, though the countries have made multilateral pledges related to ICT.<sup>87</sup>**
  - » In 2023, Russia-Africa Summit attendees, including Burkina Faso, issued a declaration that contained pledges to reform international ICT security.<sup>88</sup> The multilateral nature of this interaction limits its significance.
- **Projected Russian influence via this instrument is unknown because of the lack of observed bilateral activities.**

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved

**I3 - Cooperation in Military Intelligence and Communications****Current Influence: Unobserved****Future Influence: Unknown**

- ***There is no publicly available information about Russian attempts to influence Burkina Faso via support for military intelligence and communications.***
- ***The trajectory of Russian influence via this instrument is unknown because of a lack of publicly available information. However, there is a pathway for it to increase over the next three years given recent Burkinabé-Russian cooperation, including vague pronouncements about intelligence sharing and joint military projects.***
  - » In April 2023, Russia indicated its readiness for counterterrorism intelligence sharing with Burkina Faso.<sup>89</sup>
  - » Around June 2023, Burkinabé and Russian officials “agreed on the development of joint military-technical...projects.”<sup>90</sup> The nature of these projects is unclear.

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved

# M - Military Influence

Russia's use of military instruments to gain military influence in Burkina Faso is evident, though details remain unclear in many respects. Russia's greatest instrument of military influence in Burkina Faso is the possible presence of the Wagner Group in the country. Beyond that, the countries have a vague bilateral security agreement, and they engage on security issues through minor multilateral fora like the G5 Sahel.



## M1: Formal Bilateral Military Engagements

**Current Influence: Low**

**Projected Influence: Steady**

- **Russian employment of this instrument appears limited to the provisions of a vague 2018 agreement, and it is unclear whether they have been implemented.**
  - » In 2018, Russia and Burkina Faso signed an “agreement on technical military support” that included the joint training of forces.<sup>91</sup> It is unclear whether these joint exercises occurred.
- **Russian influence via this instrument is projected to remain steady over the next three years.**
  - » There is no clear evidence of a rise or decline in engagement.
  - » Given the Russian military's heavy losses in Ukraine, its capacity for additional bilateral military engagements may be limited in the near-term.<sup>92</sup>



## M2: Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements

**Current Influence: High**

**Projected Influence: Steady**

- **Contract security forces from Wagner are possibly present in Burkina Faso, though this is widely debated by experts and refuted by officials.**
  - » According to analysts, unspecified “Western countries,” and Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo, Russian contract security forces, specifically Wagner, are in Burkina Faso.<sup>93,94,95</sup>
  - » In February 2023, the Kremlin and Traoré denied Wagner's presence in Burkina Faso.<sup>96,97</sup> In April 2023, unnamed U.S. officials said Burkina Faso has not employed Wagner.<sup>98</sup>
  - » Still, Russian contract forces have shown interest in Burkina Faso, discussing it on Telegram, offering to train its military, and expressing support after both coups in 2022.<sup>99,100,101,102</sup> The first overthrow of Burkina Faso's government occurred after Kaboré allegedly refused to hire Wagner to conduct counterterrorism operations.<sup>103</sup>
- **Russia has seemingly heeded regional appeals for multilateral security assistance in the Sahel. The involvement of other states may limit Moscow's ability to directly influence Ouagadougou. Additionally, the volume and type of help delivered, compared to that promised, is unclear.**
  - » In 2017, Russia supported UN assistance for the newly created G5 Sahel Joint Force, a grouping that includes Burkina Faso.<sup>104</sup>
  - » Between 2018 and 2019, the G5 Sahel and Kaboré repeatedly sought greater Russian cooperation with regional counterterrorism efforts.<sup>105,106,107</sup>
  - » Between 2021 and 2023, Russia has repeatedly promised security assistance—such as personnel training and equipment—to the G5 Sahel and countries in the Sahara-Sahel, which includes Burkina Faso.<sup>108,109,110,111,112</sup>
- **Russian influence in Burkina Faso via this instrument is projected to remain steady over the next three years. However, a decrease is possible because of factors like the war in Ukraine that could limit Russia's ability to sustain engagement.**
  - » Wagner's future operations are uncertain, given its heavy losses in Ukraine and failed rebellion in June 2023.<sup>113,114</sup>
  - » Russia's economic and domestic precarity could limit its capacity to support multilateral security initiatives in the Sahel.<sup>115</sup>



### M3: Defense/Security Pacts and Agreements

**Current Influence: Low**

**Projected Influence: Increasing**

- **Russia and Burkina Faso have made at least one bilateral security cooperation agreement since 2012. Nonetheless, open-source research did not yield clear evidence of follow-through.**
  - » In 2018, the states signed an “agreement on technical military support” that the Kremlin said would be the cornerstone for defense relations.<sup>116</sup>
  - » This deal reportedly includes “weaponry,” “intelligence,” “joint training of troops,” peacekeeping cooperation, and counterterrorism cooperation.<sup>117,118</sup>
- **The states also made multilateral security pledges at two Russia-organized events, and there is possible evidence of follow-through.**
  - » In 2019, Russia-Africa Summit attendees, including Burkina Faso, issued a declaration with security pledges.<sup>119</sup> These include promises to cooperate on counterterrorism and the training of African forces.<sup>120</sup>
  - » Events like Russia promising counterterrorism assistance to the G5 Sahel may be interpreted as follow-through on these 2019 security pledges.
  - » In 2023, Russia-Africa Summit attendees, including Burkina Faso, issued another declaration containing further security pledges.<sup>121</sup> These include promises to cooperate on counterterrorism, arms control, space, and ICT security.<sup>122</sup>
  - » Insufficient time has passed since this declaration to assess follow-through.
- **Russian attempts at influence via this instrument may increase over the next three years through additional multilateral pledges. However, these agreements may be superficial and give Russia little additional influence over Burkina Faso.**
  - » Future Russia-Africa Summits are likely to result in new multilateral security cooperation pledges.
  - » However, it is unclear whether these will substantially differ from the broad promises made in 2019 and 2023, which were perhaps largely symbolic. Moreover, their multilateral nature limits the influence they would give Moscow with Ouagadougou.

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved

## E - Economic Influence

Russia's use of economic instruments to gain militarily-relevant influence in Burkina Faso is arguably the cornerstone of its strategy there, though these efforts vary by instrument. Most notably, Russia is Burkina Faso's primary supplier of arms, helicopters, and ammunition and has a long-time presence in the country's strategic mining sector. Trade relations are otherwise limited and have suffered due to Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.



### E1: Arms Transfers

**Current Influence: Very High**

**Projected Influence: Steady**

- **Russia holds an influential role as the primary arms supplier for Burkina Faso, where the security situation is deteriorating.**
  - » Between 2012 and 2022, Russia provided roughly 19 percent of Burkina Faso's arms imports by value.<sup>123</sup> This was the largest share of any country.
  - » Violence has recently soared in Burkina Faso, driven by factors including successive military coups and nonstate armed groups.<sup>124,125</sup>
- **Russia's provision of arms and equipment to Burkina Faso has been varied in type and timing since 2012.**
  - » In 2022, Russia "delivered weapons and helicopters"—reportedly including AK-47s, ammunition, an Mi-8, and an Mi-35—to Burkina Faso.<sup>126</sup>
  - » In 2018, Burkina Faso received two Mi-171Sh armed transport helicopters from Russia.<sup>127</sup> This appears to be the result of an estimated \$20 million deal that Burkina Faso signed with Rosoboronexport at the ARMY-2017 International Military-Technical Forum.<sup>128</sup> They struck a separate deal for air-launched weapons at this event.<sup>129</sup>
  - » In 2012, Russia delivered to Burkina Faso 20 Igla-S portable surface-to-air missiles for vehicle-mounted launchers.<sup>130</sup>
- **Russian influence via this instrument is projected to stay steady for the next three years. However, a decrease is possible because the war in Ukraine and other factors may limit engagement in this area.**
  - » Arms contracts and deliveries have been intermittent, occurring in 2012, 2017, 2018, and 2022.
  - » Given Russia's heavy equipment losses in Ukraine and international sanctions, its ability to provide arms may be limited in the near-term.<sup>131,132</sup>



### E2: Technology-Sharing and Joint Production Agreements

**Current Influence: Unobserved**

**Future Influence: Unknown**

- **There is no publicly available information about Russian attempts to influence Burkina Faso via tech-sharing and joint production agreements.**
- **Projected Russian influence via this instrument is unknown because of the lack of observed activities.**

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved



### E3: Trade and Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors

**Current Influence: Medium**

**Projected Influence: Steady**

- **Overall, Burkina Faso and Russia have a limited economic relationship.**<sup>133</sup>
  - » Russia is not among Burkina Faso's top five import or export partners.<sup>134</sup>
  - » Still, Burkina Faso felt economic effects, like rising food and oil prices, of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>135</sup>
- **Russia and Burkina Faso have a significant trade in minerals. Moreover, Russian entities have long operated on a notable scale within the Burkinabé mining sector. Still, the military implications of this cooperation are unclear.**
  - » In 2021, Burkina Faso's top export to Russia was refined petroleum, which accounted for 42.1 percent of overall exports.<sup>136</sup>
  - » Russian entities have participated in Burkina Faso's mining sector for at least 15 years, and Russian mining company Nordgold appears to have four sites in Burkina Faso.<sup>137, 138</sup> As of 2017, Russian mining and steel company Severstal also reportedly operated in Burkina Faso.<sup>139</sup> Both Nordgold and Severstal are closely tied to Russia's oligarchy, and Severstal has helped improve Russia's defense capabilities.<sup>140,141,142</sup>
  - » In 2022, Akufo-Addo alleged that Burkina Faso gave Wagner mining rights in exchange for its services.<sup>143</sup> The Burkinabé government denied this.<sup>144</sup>
- **Russian influence via this instrument is projected to remain steady over the next three years given that its trade and cooperation with Burkina Faso is currently mixed and susceptible to the country's deteriorating security situation and sanctions on Russia as a result of its invasion of Ukraine.**
  - » In 2023, Burkinabé officials proposed a bilateral committee and an Africa-Russia bank to facilitate trade.<sup>145,146</sup>
  - » Russia's economic and domestic precarity could limit its engagement with Burkina Faso in this instrument.<sup>147</sup> In 2022, the Burkinabe government told companies to "reorient themselves towards other suppliers of metals and hydrocarbons" due to the Russia-Ukraine war.<sup>148</sup>
  - » Nordgold is reducing its footprint in Burkina Faso due to insecurity.<sup>149,150</sup> Moreover, the company and related Russian elites are under U.S., EU, and Canadian sanctions.<sup>151,152,153,154</sup>

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved

## CONCLUSIONS

**Russia's current M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as medium. Russia relies strongly on Informational, Economic, and to a lesser extent Military instruments.** The United States has a clear interest in countering every type of national power instrument employed by Russia. Indeed, the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy frames “constraining Russia” as one of two “global priorities” and condemns Russia’s “imperialist foreign policy,” which is reinforcing authoritarianism and insecurity in Burkina Faso.<sup>155</sup> Russian use of Informational, Economic, and Military instruments for influence in Burkina Faso spans diverse areas, including media, informal and multilateral security initiatives, and trade. Principal tactics include information operations, which the United States is committed to exposing under the National Security Strategy.<sup>156</sup> The Russia-Burkina Faso economic relationship, which includes a significant trade in arms and minerals, is likewise of interest to the United States. Cutting off revenue that Russia derives from Burkina Faso may reinforce Western sanctions against the Kremlin, and disrupting Russia’s provision of arms to Burkina Faso may facilitate U.S. efforts to support peace in the Sahel.<sup>157</sup> The unconfirmed presence of Wagner personnel in Burkina Faso is perhaps another notable Russian influence activity. According to the National Security Strategy, the United States has a commitment to “push back on the destabilizing impact of the Russia-backed Wagner Group.”<sup>158</sup> Yet, countering Russian influence may be difficult due to the opacity of Russia-Burkina Faso relations. Confirmed, open-source information about bilateral engagement is limited in detail and quantity.

**Overall, Russia's projected M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as steady over the next three years. Military, Economic, and especially Informational instruments are likely to remain important in the Russia-Burkina Faso relationship.** The National Security Strategy pledges to “continue to counter Russia’s attempts to weaken and destabilize sovereign nations.”<sup>159</sup> Burkina Faso may be highly susceptible to Russia’s multi-instrument influence activities given its political instability, military rule, and recent surge in military expenditures.<sup>160</sup> Addressing Russian military influence in Burkina Faso may require disrupting the seeds of illiberalism that Moscow is planting in Ouagadougou.<sup>161</sup> Influence activities are projected to remain spread across several areas, particularly media outreach and alignment. Even if the Kremlin must limit its activities in other areas, maintaining informational operations in the Sahel is a relatively low-cost activity with clear strategic advantages. The ideological and geopolitical connections between Moscow and Ouagadougou are poised to deepen as they both continue to rebuff Western powers. Russia may also reopen its embassy in Burkina Faso; additional high-level, militarily relevant meetings may occur; and the countries may make new multilateral security pledges. Russia’s heavy military and economic losses due to the war in Ukraine may limit its capacity to engage with Burkina Faso in other areas, such as arms provision. Still, Washington has an interest in continuing to counter influence activities by Moscow, which collectively jeopardize democratic ideals and stability in the Sahel.<sup>162</sup>

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