

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

Tracking Russian and Chinese military influence in states around the world

Instruments of Chinese Military Influence in Burkina Faso

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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

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

-  **Cultural and Media Outreach, Influence and Alignment (I1).** China has rigorously engaged with Burkinabé media since the restoration of diplomatic ties in 2018, and Burkinabé public approval of China is high. The spread of Chinese ideology, which has military and strategic dimensions, probably dampens Burkinabé attitudes toward the United States and its democratic partners.
-  **Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sector Support (I2).** Chinese banks and companies have financed and helped implement high-profile ICT projects in Burkina Faso. This reflects China’s foreign policy emphasis on development and Beijing’s use of its technological prowess to consolidate militarily relevant influence.
-  **Trade and Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors (E3).** China is a top trading partner for Burkina Faso, and the countries have a significant exchange in minerals. Though not overtly military-related, this trade supports China’s use of “economic power to coerce countries,” which the United States deems a security concern.

China’s projected M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as Steady. Some of the most important instruments for China’s future influence in Burkina Faso include:

-  **Cultural and Media Outreach, Influence and Alignment (I1).** China’s influence will likely rise as Burkinabé public approval grows and China enjoys dividends from activities like local media engagement and the Confucius Institute in Bobo-Dioulasso. This may further undercut Burkinabé engagement with the United States and its democratic partners, including in the security realm.
-  **Trade and Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors (E3).** The countries have signaled interest in greater trade and strategic sector cooperation, as illustrated by China’s recent removal of tariffs on most Burkinabé goods. Deeper ties in this instrument may give China, the economic heavyweight, greater leverage in Burkina Faso.

DIPLOMATIC / INFORMATION			MILITARY / ECONOMIC					
	D1	Defense-Related Diplomacy			M1	Formal Bilateral Military Engagements		
	D2	International Military Education and Training			M2	Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements		
	D3	Soft Power Activities			M3	Defense/Security Pacts and Agreements		
	I1	Cultural/Media Outreach, Collaboration, Alignment			E1	Arms Transfers		
	I2	Information/Communications Technology Support			E2	Technology-Sharing, Joint Production Agreements		
	I3	Cooperation in Military Intelligence/Communications			E3	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 CHINA-BURKINA FASO MILITARY RELATIONS

Burkina Faso and China for decades have had an erratic diplomatic relationship that has impeded military partnership. Since the 1960s, Ouagadougou has wavered between recognizing Beijing and Taipei three times.¹ This so-called “yo-yo diplomacy” is seemingly the result of Burkina Faso’s tendency to choose partners based on their willingness to help resolve domestic Burkinabé crises.² Between 1994 and 2018, Burkina Faso and Taiwan maintained diplomatic relations and security cooperation, including meetings between their heads of state and International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs.^{3,4} Given the acrimonious nature of Taiwan-China relations, in practice, this meant Burkina Faso was militarily aligned against China. In 2018, Burkina Faso cut ties with Taiwan and re-established relations with China.⁵ Beijing had reportedly denied development and security assistance to Ouagadougou because of its relations with Taipei.^{6,7} Since the restoration of diplomatic ties, Burkina Faso and China appear to have deepened their military relationship, including through IMET and multilateral fora like the G5 Sahel Joint Force.^{8,9} However, open-source information reveals little activity in their military partnership, with no bilateral engagement identified in areas like intelligence sharing, military training, and joint operations. China issued restrained statements following the January 2022 and September 2022 coup d’états in Burkina Faso, which has spent most of its history under military rule.^{10,11,12} Beijing’s response may reflect its limited strategic interests in Burkina Faso and its principle of non-interference in other states’ affairs.¹³ Still, Burkina Faso’s political volatility, ongoing military rule, and recent surge in military expenditures may create opportunities for Chinese military influence.¹⁴

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.¹⁵ Seeking to combat terrorism in the Sahel, the United States funded, trained, and armed Burkinabé forces beginning in 2009.¹⁶ 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.^{17,18,19} In contrast, China has maintained broad engagement with successive Burkinabé governments, seeking influence in multiple, military-relevant areas. China’s interest in Burkina Faso also likely reflects its strategic objective of invalidating Taiwan as a global player. Washington sees Beijing as its only adversary with both the intent and capability to “reshape the international order.”²⁰ The United States thus has an interest in countering China’s “significantly increased engagement” with African countries like Burkina Faso to prevent the spread of authoritarianism.^{21,22} Specifically, the 2022 National Defense Strategy pledges to help “disrupt malign PRC...activities on the continent.”²³

BURKINA FASO AT A GLANCE

Capital	Ouagadougou
Population	22,489,126 (2023 estimate) ²⁴
GDP per Capita	\$2,200 (2021 estimate) ²⁵
Head of Government	Prime Minister Apollinaire Joachim Kyélem de Tambèla ²⁶
Head of State	Captain Ibrahim Traore ²⁷
Minister of Defense	Colonel Kassoum Coulibaly ²⁸
Chief of General Staff	Brigadier General Célestin Simporé ²⁹
Military Expenditure (total)	\$562.58 million (2022 estimate) ³⁰
Military Expenditure (% of GDP)	3.1% (2022 estimate) ³¹
Armed Service Branches	<p>Armed Forces of Burkina Faso (FABF), a.k.a. National Armed Forces (FAN), a.k.a. Defense and Security Forces (Forces de Défense et de Sécurité or FDS): Army of Burkina Faso (L'Armée de Terre, LAT), Air Force of Burkina Faso (Force Aérienne de Burkina Faso), National Gendarmerie, National Fire Brigade (Brigade Nationale de Sapeurs-Pompier or BNSP); Homeland Defense Volunteers (Forcés de Volontaires de Défense pour la Patrie or VDP)</p> <p>Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Security (Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale, de la Décentralisation et de la Sécurité): National Police (2023)³²</p>
Active Armed Forces Personnel	14,000 (2023 estimate) ³³

D - Diplomatic Influence

China's use of diplomatic instruments to gain military influence in Burkina Faso is limited in its significance. China has trained some Burkinabé military personnel, though the volume and frequency of this type of engagement is unknown. Furthermore, China has not made high-level security visits to Burkina Faso. China's most consistent influence efforts via this instrument have been multilateral sporting events.



D1 - Defense-Related Diplomacy

Current Influence: Very Low

Projected Influence: Steady

- **Chinese and Burkinabé heads of state have met only once since 2012.**
 - » In 2018, former Burkinabé President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing.³⁴ Xi reportedly expressed support for Burkina Faso's counterterrorism and stabilization efforts.³⁵ This meeting occurred prior to a multilateral summit attended by other African heads of state, thus limiting its significance.
- **High-level Chinese defense sector personnel have not made public visits to Burkina Faso since 2012.**
 - » The only potential example of Chinese defense diplomacy is a 2019 report that personnel from China's Ministry of National Defense visited Burkina Faso.³⁶ No further details were found.
 - » In contrast, Chinese military personnel have made senior-level visits or naval port calls to other West African countries—including Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo—during the same period.³⁷
- **There is no indication that Chinese attempts at influence via this instrument will increase in the next three years. Yet, a further decrease is unlikely given the current low volume of activity.**
 - » The meeting between Kaboré and Xi appeared to mark the restoration of diplomatic relations, which might suggest an increase in such visits.³⁸ However, no additional marquee events are anticipated.



D2 - International Military Education and Training

Current Influence: Low

Future Influence: Steady

- **China appears to have educated some Burkinabé forces, including at its military academies, though little is known about the volume, frequency, and specific types of engagement.**
 - » As of 2022, there were reportedly 72 scholarships for "Burkinabe students and government representatives to attend military academies in China."^{39,40} It is unclear whether these were a one-time occurrence or are recurring.
 - » In a 2020 op-ed for China Military Online, an officer in the Burkina Faso Armed Forces described his experience at the PLA Army Engineering University, praising China's development model.⁴¹
 - » In 2019, a Chinese official stated "we...train Burkinabè officers and soldiers," though he did not specify the number of personnel or type of training.⁴²
- **China planned as of 2020 to increase training of Burkinabé armed forces, but there are no indications this occurred, suggesting Chinese attempts at influence via this instrument are likely to remain steady in the next three years.**
 - » In 2020, China expressed its intent to increase counterterrorism coordination with Burkina Faso through personnel training.⁴³

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved



D3 - Soft Power Activities

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **Chinese and Burkinabé forces have participated in the same military sporting events. Yet, the routine and multilateral nature of these engagements limits China’s ability to consolidate influence. They are thus minimally significant.**
 - » Most notably, in 2019, a Burkinabé delegation traveled to China for the 7th International Military Sports Council Military World Games.⁴⁴
 - » Burkina Faso and China jointly participated in additional military sporting events in 2015 and 2022.^{45,46}
- **Chinese and Burkinabé military personnel may have jointly undertaken humanitarian activities through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), but their degree of interaction in the context of the mission is unknown.**
 - » As of May 2023, Burkinabé and Chinese military personnel were both serving as MINUSMA peacekeepers.⁴⁷
- **Chinese influence via this instrument will likely remain limited over the next three years, especially given MINUSMA’s end. Yet, the possible establishment of a Burkinabé military mission in Beijing may increase Chinese influence over the next three years.**
 - » The UN Security Council did not renew MINUSMA’s mandate in June 2023, and peacekeepers will withdraw by the end of the year.⁴⁸ This will likely impede the two militaries’ future interactions.
 - » In 2020, Ouagadougou said it was “opening...a military mission in Beijing.”⁴⁹ This project’s status is unclear.



I - Informational Influence

China increasingly uses informational instruments to gain militarily-relevant influence in Burkina Faso with notable success. Beijing has sought to expand its military influence via informational instruments since Ouagadougou realigned diplomatically with China in 2018. China's efforts include materially supporting Burkinabé media, backing ICT projects, and opening a Confucius Institute. Burkinabé public approval of China is high.



I1 - Cultural and Media Outreach, Collaboration and Alignment

Current Influence: Low

Future Influence: Increasing

- **China has engaged with and supported Burkinabé news outlets, even suggesting that local media would disseminate its “voice.”**
 - » Chinese officials have given interviews to Burkinabé news outlets and met with state media about unspecified “cooperation.”^{50,51}
 - » In 2020, China donated equipment to a local radio station it said would “actively convey the good voice of China.”⁵²
 - » In 2018, Burkinabé journalists trained in China.⁵³
- **Chinese efforts at influence via this instrument will likely increase over the next three years given rising Burkinabé public approval. Chinese investments in media and a Confucius Institute may also yield dividends in influence.**
 - » In 2019, 80 percent of Burkinabés said Chinese economic and political influence was “somewhat positive” or “very positive.”⁵⁴ This is a slight increase from 2015.
 - » Between 2015 and 2019, there was a 21 percent rise in Burkinabés choosing China’s development model over the U.S. one.⁵⁵
 - » China has one Confucius Institute in Burkina Faso, which opened in 2019.^{56,57,58}



I2 - Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sector Support

Current Influence: High

Future Influence: Increasing

- **Chinese entities have long been part of the Burkinabé telecommunications sector. They recently gained prominence through high-profile ICT projects.**
 - » At least two Chinese ICT companies—Huawei and ZTE—have operated in Burkina Faso since before 2012.⁵⁹ The Bank of China, Eximbank of China, and China International Telecommunication Construction Corporation have participated in recent Burkinabé ICT projects.^{60,61}
 - » Most notably, in 2021, officials unveiled “Smart Burkina,” a \$94 million project to address terrorism and organized crime.^{62,63} Backed by Chinese partners, Smart Burkina includes installing 900 surveillance cameras and fiber optic networks.⁶⁴
- **Burkina Faso has engaged multilaterally with China on ICT issues, and there has been bilateral follow-through on broad pledges made at the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).**
 - » In 2018 and 2021, FOCAC attendees issued action plans that include ICT cooperation in both commercial and security areas.^{65,66}
 - » At the 2018 FOCAC conference, China pledged to “support African countries in building ‘smart cities’ and enhancing the role of ICT in safeguarding public security.”⁶⁷ Three years later, officials announced the China-backed “Smart Burkina” project.⁶⁸
- **Longstanding collaboration and successful implementation of ongoing projects in the ICT sector could increase Chinese militarily-relevant influence in Burkina Faso over the next three years.**

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved



13 - Cooperation in Military Intelligence and Communications

Current Influence: Unobserved

Future Influence: Unknown

- ***There is no publicly available information about Chinese attempts to cooperate with Burkina Faso in military intelligence and communications.***
 - » The most relevant information available is that China reportedly gave security-related “equipment” to G5 Sahel members like Burkina Faso.⁶⁹ It is unclear whether this included equipment related to military intelligence and communications.
- ***Projected Chinese influence via this instrument is unknown because of the lack of observed activities.***

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved



M - Military Influence

China’s use of military instruments to gain military influence in Burkina Faso is limited in its effectiveness. No clear evidence exists of bilateral military activities between the two countries. Instead, Chinese use of military influence instruments in Burkina Faso occurs through multilateral fora like the G5 Sahel, MINUSMA, and FOCAC. The involvement of other actors in these engagements, however, limits China’s ability to directly influence Burkina Faso.



M1: Formal Bilateral Military Engagements

Current Influence: Unobserved

Future Influence: Unknown

- **There is no clear evidence of Chinese efforts at military influence via formal bilateral military engagements since 2012.**
- **Projected Chinese influence via this instrument is unknown because of the lack of observed activities.**



M2: Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Decreasing

- **China has repeatedly promised aid to the G5 Sahel, a multilateral grouping that includes Burkina Faso, to address terrorism in West Africa. The current volume and type of assistance, as well as delivery mechanisms, are unclear.**
 - » In 2021, a Chinese official pledged to continue aid for the G5 Sahel Joint Force “through bilateral channels.”⁷⁰ This implies possible direct coordination between China and Burkina Faso.
 - » In 2019, China promised approximately \$45 million in assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force.⁷¹ This reportedly included \$7 million in “arms & equipment” for each member state, including Burkina Faso.⁷²
- **Chinese and Burkinabé forces have collaborated as peacekeepers, likely in a tactical capacity, though open-source research could not confirm this.**
 - » It is probable that Chinese and Burkinabé peacekeepers have cooperated operationally in MINUSMA given the mission’s highly tactical nature.⁷³
- **MINUSMA’s confirmed closure is likely to decrease China’s ability to exert operational military influence via this instrument over the next three years. Yet, broad security goals articulated in a “vision” statement about China-Africa relations could reinvigorate multilateral military engagement.**
 - » Continued security coordination is included in the multilateral “China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035,” which emerged out of the 2021 FOCAC forum.⁷⁴ However, this document does not specifically mention Burkina Faso or the G5 Sahel.



M3: Defense/Security Pacts and Agreements

Current Influence: Very Low

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **China and Burkina Faso lack bilateral defense or security cooperation agreements. Still, they have made multilateral pledges in China-organized fora, and there is some evidence of follow-through.**
 - » In 2021, FOCAC attendees included various security cooperation pledges and priorities in their “Dakar Action Plan,” “Dakar Declaration,” and “China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035.”^{75,76,77} Beijing has reported various follow-up actions to the 2021 meeting, including the “continued” provision of “military aid to countries in Sahel.”⁷⁸ Burkina Faso was not specifically mentioned.
 - » In 2018, FOCAC attendees included various security cooperation pledges in their “Beijing Action Plan” and “Beijing Declaration.”^{79,80} As an outcome of the 2018 meeting, Beijing has reported “deeper” China-Africa security cooperation, including in areas relevant to Burkina Faso like the G5 Sahel Joint Force and UN peacekeeping operations.⁸¹
- **Chinese use of this instrument for military influence in Burkina Faso may increase over the next three years through additional multilateral pledges, though the depth of these potential agreements is questionable.**
 - » The 2024 FOCAC event will likely result in new multilateral security pledges. However, these may largely replicate those from 2018 and 2021, which are broad and probably largely symbolic.



E - Economic Influence

China has exerted significant, militarily-relevant influence in Burkina Faso through the economic category as a whole, though its efforts are not evenly distributed across instruments and have been uneven. China's primary military-adjacent economic influences in Burkina Faso occur through trade, including in the strategic sector of mining. Chinese arms transfers to Burkina Faso are minimal, and there is no open-source evidence of tech-sharing or joint production agreements.



E1: Arms Transfers

Current Influence: Very Low

Projected Influence: Steady

- **China has consistently sold Burkina Faso weapons, though these shipments have been very low-value.**
 - » China exported weapons and related goods to Burkina Faso in most years since 2012, with annual trade values between \$574 and roughly \$25,000.^{82,83}
 - » It is unclear if these arms were for military use. Given import restrictions, it seems likely they were for defensive, security, or peace operations.⁸⁴
- **Limited data and a historically non-linear trendline make it difficult to predict how Chinese arms transfers may change over the next three years. A decrease in the current low-level exchange is unlikely to substantially reduce Chinese influence over Burkina Faso. There is also no indication that arms transfers, and thus influence, will increase.**



E2: Technology-Sharing and Joint Production Agreements

Current Influence: Unobserved

Future Influence: Unknown

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



E3: Trade and Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors

Current Influence: Medium

Future Influence: Increasing

- **Economic exchange is important to the China-Burkina Faso relationship.**
 - » China has prioritized economic and investment ties in West Africa.⁸⁵ It is Burkina Faso's largest import partner and fifth-largest export partner.⁸⁶
- **Although China and Burkina Faso have a significant trade in minerals, Chinese entities do not operate on a notable scale within the Burkinabé mining sector.**
 - » In 2021, ores, slag, and ash accounted for 63.4 percent of Burkina Faso's exports to China, with zinc ore being its greatest overall export.^{87,88} Chinese entities have also had some interest in Burkina Faso's gold mining sector.^{89,90} These limited activities do not appear to have major strategic implications.
 - » Despite the Burkinabé-Chinese trade in minerals, no bilateral agreements about mining cooperation were identified. Moreover, Chinese companies do not maintain notable mining operations in Burkina Faso.
- **Burkina Faso has indicated interest in nuclear power, and its former president met with a Chinese entity linked to Beijing's military nuclear activities. However, there is no clear evidence of Burkinabé-Chinese nuclear collaboration.**
 - » In 2018, Kaboré visited the offices of Nucotech, a security equipment company with ties to the China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC).^{91,92} CNNC "is the leading state-owned enterprise for China's civilian and military nuclear programs."⁹³
 - » In 2015, Burkina Faso signed a multilateral agreement to develop "an integrated West African regional nuclear power programme."⁹⁴
- **Bilateral trade and cooperation in strategic commodities/sectors are expected to increase over the next three years.**
 - » In 2023, the countries discussed reinvigorating their trade partnership.⁹⁵
 - » In 2022, China removed tariffs on most goods from Burkina Faso.⁹⁶
 - » Between 2016 and 2021, Burkinabé exports of ores, slag, and ash to China increased by 962 percent.⁹⁷

Very High

High

Medium

Low

Very Low

Unobserved

CONCLUSIONS

China's current M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as Low. China's use of the Informational and Economic instruments of national power are the most important for its military influence in Burkina Faso, which reflects China's historical emphasis on spreading its ideology and spurring development in West Africa.⁹⁸

Although China's narrative in Africa is highly critical of the United States, an overt, anti-U.S. influence campaign by China was not identified in Burkina Faso. Trade between China and Burkina Faso may not be directly harming U.S. economic interests. However, Chinese economic diplomacy serves Beijing's broader ambitions, which the 2022 National Security Strategy describes as damaging.⁹⁹ Current Chinese influence activities in Burkina Faso are concentrated in areas that are not strictly military-related, like media, technology, and trade. Specific efforts include China's support for Burkinabé ICT projects and removal of tariffs on most goods from Burkina Faso. While not overtly militaristic, the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy warns of China's manipulation of "its technological capacity," use of "economic power to coerce countries," and effort "to make the world more dependent on the PRC."¹⁰⁰

China's projected M-DIME influence in Burkina Faso is assessed as Steady over the next three years. The Informational and Economic instruments are likely to remain the principal levers of influence, again reflecting Beijing's traditional foreign policy priorities. Various factors leave Ouagadougou open to Beijing's influence as Burkina Faso and China enter their fifth year of diplomatic relations. These factors include Burkinabé political volatility, military governance, and economic need. Burkina Faso has a record of aligning with partners that can help address its domestic issues.¹⁰¹ Thus, the United States has a clear, continued interest in countering China's overall influence in Burkina Faso as it seeks to defend democracy and maintain the current international order.¹⁰² Chinese activities in non-military areas like media, technology, and trade are expected to remain strategically relevant. First, China's engagement with local media may yield greater public approval, with repercussions for U.S. interests; Burkinabés already increasingly prefer China's development model over that of the United States.¹⁰³ Second, China's removal of tariffs on most Burkinabé goods may strengthen the bilateral trade relationship, reinforcing China's economic model to the detriment of U.S. interests.¹⁰⁴ Yet, there are caveats to the projected growth of Chinese influence in other areas. For instance, China-backed ICT projects in Burkina Faso may face setbacks, and additional multilateral security pledges will not necessarily deepen Beijing's bilateral influence over Ouagadougou. Nevertheless, Chinese-Burkinabé engagement through these activities risks undermining U.S. development and counterterrorism activities in the Sahel.

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