

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

Tracking Russian and Chinese military influence in states around the world

Instruments of Russian Military Influence in Mali

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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

Russia's current M-DIME influence in Mali is assessed as Medium. Some of the most important instruments for Russia's influence in Mali include:



Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements (M2). The Russian private military company Wagner Group has entrenched itself in Mali, taking over for the former multilateral effort that was ousted by the ruling junta. Russia's use of Wagner is its most important source of military influence, allowing Russia to influence Mali's training, recruiting, operations, and strategy, as well as to exploit local resources.



Arms Transfers (E1). Russia has a consistent record of being the top arms supplier to Mali, with approximately 80 percent of Malian military equipment originating from Russia. Mali's reliance on Russian arms provides a strong financial and logistical link between the two countries.

Russia's projected M-DIME influence in Mali is assessed as Increasing. Some of the most important instruments for Russia's projected influence in Mali include:



Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements (M2). With the exit of French troops and the end of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) effort, Mali will likely further rely on Wagner for training, counterterrorism operations, and other missions to secure the control of the military junta. If Wagner can permanently expand its influence into Mali, it will likely try to spread to other African nations.



International Military Education and Training (D2). Russia has a long history of training high-ranking Malian military officials and has recently provided training utilizing conventional and Wagner personnel. Recent statements by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov indicating an increasing commitment to training Malian specialists in Russian Ministry of Defense Universities and increasing the number of academic scholarships suggest this instrument will be key over the next three years.

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 RUSSIA-MALI MILITARY RELATIONS

The relationship between Mali and Russia can be traced back to 1960, when the Soviet Union officially recognized an independent Mali and established diplomatic relations.¹ In 1961, Bamako and Moscow signed an initial agreement on technical cooperation focusing on education.² Soviet trainers were present in Mali in the 1970s to train pilots and improve military infrastructure, and in 1972, they began supplying weapons after Mali suppressed a local rebellion.^{3 4} During the Cold War, Mali took an official position of neutrality alongside the other “Casablanca group” countries of Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, and Morocco.⁵ However, unofficially, many Malian officers who had traveled to the Soviet Union for training were sympathetic to the Soviet bloc.^{6 7} Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, there was little activity between the two countries during the fall of the Soviet Union and the transition to the Russian Federation.

The Russia-Mali relationship started its revival in 2005 when Russian and Malian leaders met as part of the International Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism and Cross-Border Organized Crime.⁸ In 2012, Mali experienced its first military coup, which was widely condemned by the international community, including the Russian Federation.^{9 10} In 2020, Mali experienced a second military coup as a result of ongoing protests due to the government’s handling of insurgency and terrorism in the country, as well as widespread corruption.¹¹ After the coup, reports began circulating of Russian involvement and training of the coup leaders, such as Assimi Goïta, who became vice president.^{12 13} The president elected after this coup did not last long, as 2021 saw yet another coup in Mali, led by Goïta.¹⁴ Under Goïta’s military regime, Mali has invited Russia’s Wagner Group, which is now replacing much of the Western influence formerly in the country. Initially, the Malian military invited Wagner to play an advisory role, but the scope of its responsibilities has grown. This is a sharp contrast

from over a decade of French and Western influence through Operation Barkhane and the UN’s MINUSMA effort in Mali, where French and coalition forces aided the Malian military in counterterrorism operations against Islamic militants.¹⁵

The Sahel has increasingly become a focal point of global affairs. For its part, the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy addresses its commitment to Africa, with goals of strengthening political and economic relationships.¹⁶ According to this strategy, African countries have become a major geopolitical force beset by complex issues.¹⁷ One of the goals outlined by the current U.S. administration is “pushing back on the destabilizing impact of the Russia-backed Wagner Group,” which has entrenched itself in countries like Mali.¹⁸ Indeed, with the end of Operation Barkhane and the withdrawal of French troops, the ruling military junta in Mali has chosen to rely on Moscow for counterterrorism aid.¹⁹

MALI AT A GLANCE

Capital	Bamako ²⁰
Population	23,457,965 (2023 estimate) ²¹
GDP per Capita	\$2,100 (2021 estimate) ²²
Head of Government	Colonel Assimi Goïta ²³
Head of State	Colonel Assimi Goïta ²⁴
Minister of Defense	Colonel Sadio Camara ²⁵
Chief of General Staff	Oumar Diarra ²⁶
Military Expenditure (total)	\$515 million (2022 estimate) ²⁷
Military Expenditure (% of GDP)	3.5% (2022 estimate) ²⁸
Armed Service Branches	Malian Armed Forces (Forces Armées Maliennes or FAMA): Land Forces (l'Armée de Terre), Air Force (l'Armée de l'Air); National Guard (la Garde Nationale du Mali or GNM); General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie (la Direction Générale de la Gendarmerie Nationale or DGGN) ²⁹
Active Armed Forces Personnel	35,000 (2023 estimate) ³⁰

D - Diplomatic Influence

Russia and Mali have longstanding military-diplomatic relations, which deepened after the most recent military coup that installed Assimi Goïta as the Interim President in May 2021. Most notably, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov conducted a historic first security cooperation visit to the country in February 2023 to display the importance of this partnership. Russia's Wagner Group has also begun training Malian security forces.



D1 - Defense-Related Diplomacy

Current Influence: Medium

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **Russia has prioritized military-diplomatic efforts to ingratiate itself with Goïta's military regime.**
 - » Russia has made a consistent effort to show support for Goïta's regime with multiple meetings between Alexander Fomin, Russian Deputy Minister of Defense, and Sadio Camara, Mali's Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs. These meetings have taken place in August 2021, March 2022, and August 2022.^{31 32 33}
 - » In 2023, Lavrov completed a historic first security cooperation visit to Mali as part of his campaign across Africa.³⁴
 - » In August 2023, Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yunus-Bek Yevkurov led a military delegation visit to Mali, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Republic of Guinea, and Libya. This visit appeared to be an attempt to ensure continuity in areas of Wanger influence after the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin.³⁵
- **Evidence exists of Russian diplomatic interactions with elements of the coup leadership before both recent coups.**
 - » Prior to the military coup in 2020, Russia met with and signed a security cooperation agreement with the Malian military leaders responsible for the coup, giving Moscow a favorable position in the new regime.^{36 37}
 - » Before the 2021 military coup led by Goïta, Russian Ambassador to Mali Igor Gromyko met with the plotters in August 2020.^{38 39}
- **Current trends suggest that Russian influence via military-related diplomacy in Mali will increase over the next three years. Russia has publicly expressed an intention for continued support to the country and Goïta's military regime.**
 - » In February 2023, the Kremlin pledged to help Mali with numerous strategic goals, such as counterterrorism and military modernization.⁴⁰
 - » Lavrov's 2023 visit to Mali stressed enhancing the capability of Malian Security Forces, as well as increased training and cooperation with Russia.⁴¹



D2 - International Military Education and Training

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs have not been a priority in Russia's military diplomacy toward Mali, though this is quickly changing given the recent entrance of Wagner into Mali.**
- **From 2012 to 2019, open sources revealed no IMET programs between Russia and Mali. However, in 2019, Lavrov began to make statements about the Ministry of Defense providing training to Mali.⁴²**
 - » Currently, Bamako insists that Wagner and Russian military troops are in country with the sole purpose of security and training and is paying nearly \$11 million dollars a month for their assistance.⁴³
 - » As of January 2022, Wagner soldiers have occupied a base in Timbuktu to train Malian Security Forces.⁴⁴ However, no specific information about the nature of this training is available.
 - » During his 2023 visit to Bamako, Lavrov said Russia would educate Malian specialists at Ministry of Defense universities to increase military-technical cooperation. Lavrov and his Malian interlocutors also discussed collaboration on law enforcement antiterrorism training.⁴⁵
- **Mali has shown eagerness for Russian military training, which Moscow appears poised to provide. As a result, Russian influence in Mali via IMET appears very likely to increase in the next three years.**
 - » To increase bilateral ties between the two nations, Russia increased its academic scholarships for Malian personnel from 35 to 290 in 2023. This figure includes universities through the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁴⁶



D3 - Soft Power Activities

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Steady

- **Russia and Mali cooperate in similar military-diplomatic activities with one another as they each do with other countries. Thus, while evident, Russia's military "soft power" diplomacy provides little influence in Mali and is generally confined to symbolic events.**
 - » Mali regularly participates in Russia's International Army Games, and in 2021, a Malian tank battalion participated for the first time.⁴⁷ Mali also participated in the 2022 games and is expected to participate in future symbolic military events hosted by the Russian Federation.⁴⁸
 - » In Mali, as in other locations in Africa, Wagner forces integrate with Russian military forces for training, advising, and other soft power military-diplomatic activities. As such, Malian military members are exposed to soft-power influence from Russia, though differentiating between influence from Wagner and official Russian Ministry of Defense personnel is difficult.⁴⁹
- **Current trends do not suggest any significant changes to the overall low level of Russian influence via military-diplomatic soft power activities in Mali over the next three years. Thus, Russia's use of this instrument is expected to remain steady in the future.**

I - Informational Influence

Informational influence has been a crucial component of the overall Russian strategy to gain military influence in Mali. Long-term Russian information and disinformation campaigns have tried to influence Malian public perception in favor of Moscow. Additionally, Russia has gained military influence in both the civilian and military ICT sectors.



I1 - Cultural and Media Outreach, Collaboration, and Alignment

Current Influence: High

Projected Influence: Steady

- **Information campaigns have been a critical component of Russia's strategy in Mali; however, no official cooperation between Russian and Malian media institutions was visible.**
 - » Russian information campaigns work to minimize the influence of Western nations in Mali.⁵⁰ For instance, Russian media spread allegations of French military personnel committing atrocities against Malian citizens and placing their bodies in mass graves based on footage released in April 2022.^{51 52}
 - » Multiple Facebook pages that appeared to be connected to Russia were identified just prior to the 2021 coup and the subsequent attempt at democratic elections. These pages spread over 24,000 anti-Western posts directed to Malian citizens, which helped galvanize support against elections.⁵³
 - » Russian media companies such as *Russia Today (RT)* have tried to downplay or reject evidence of Mali's deteriorating security situation against jihadist-linked insurgents, probably to defend Wagner's primary role in trying to combat them.
- **Moscow has interacted with Malian civil society groups expressing pro-Russia sentiment since approximately 2017.**
 - » Though there is no open-source evidence to suggest direct financing or coordination by Russia, Moscow has met with members of pro-Russia civil society groups in Mali like Le Groupe des Patriotes du Mali (GPM), sending former ambassador Alexei Doulian to meet with its members.⁵⁴
 - » In May 2023, the GPM, led by Mahmoud Dicko, delivered a petition to Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maïga with an alleged 8 million citizen signatures—constituting over one-third of Mali's total population—requesting increased Malian ties with Russia.^{55 56}
 - » Other civil society groups, such as the Yerewolo-Debout sur les Remparts (Unerringly Standing on the Ramparts), hold pro-Russia demonstrations in Bamako. Demonstrators commonly chant in both French and Russian,⁵⁷ though open sources do not reveal Russian connections with such groups.
- **Like other countries in Africa, there has been a coordinated pro-Russia social media campaign in Mali.**
 - » The Atlantic Council's Digital Forensics Research Lab noted a coordinated online social media effort to push pro-Russia sentiment just before the French withdrawal from the country.⁵⁸
 - » Russian disinformation campaigns were also active during Wagner's arrival in Mali.⁵⁹
- **Given the success of these efforts, Russian attempts to gain influence via this instrument will likely remain steady over the next three years.**



I2 - Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sector Support

Current Influence: Very Low

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **There are only limited indications of Russian attempts to gain influence in the Malian ICT sector though, as of 2023, more discussions are emerging.**
 - » Prior to 2022, open-source research did not reveal Russian influence in the Malian ICT sector.
 - » However, in July 2023, President Goïta attended the Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg, speaking on the increased collaboration with Russia in many fields, including science and infrastructure technology.⁶⁰ As of November 2023, this has not resulted in a formal cooperation agreement.
 - » Goïta's government has also sought Russian assistance on a space-based internet solution to boost its overall connectivity in 2022.⁶¹
- **The ICT sector in Mali is underdeveloped in comparison to other nations, thus offering an opening to Russia or other countries to gain influence there.**
 - » As of 2022, only 30 percent of Malians have access to the internet.⁶² While very low, this represents a tenfold increase from 2012.⁶³

- » Many of Mali's ICT improvements have been through global initiatives, such as the Global Alliance for ICT, run by the UN.⁶⁴ ⁶⁵ A bilateral partner could be deemed attractive by Bamako given continued struggles with multilateral modernization efforts due to terrorism and armed rebellion, an issue Wagner has pledged to resolve.

- ***Given that Russia and Mali have shown concerted interest in ICT sector cooperation, Russia's influence via this instrument is likely to increase over the next three years.***



I3 - Cooperation in Military Intelligence and Communications

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Steady

- ***While little information exists regarding Russia's use of this instrument, some open sources suggest that Mali relies on Russia's remote detection technology.***
 - » Mali utilizes Russian telecommunications systems for military applications. The radar system used by the Malian army for airspace security is connected to Russia. Russian systems are also used to gather data on space by the Malian government.⁶⁶
- ***There is no evidence to suggest a substantial shift in the use of this instrument and Russian influence is likely to remain steady.***
 - » Due to the secretive nature of military intelligence and communication, open-source information may not paint an accurate picture of the scope of cooperation in this instrument.

M - Military Influence

Russia's military influence in Mali has substantially risen since the withdrawal of French troops involved with Operation Barkhane in November 2022 and the announced withdrawal of coalition forces from the UN's MINUSMA effort in June 2023. Russia has deepened its military influence in Mali primarily by replacing the French and UN troops with Wagner mercenaries, leading to an overall increase of Russia-linked operations throughout the country. Wagner forces have expanded their mission from primarily training at first to now include fighting alongside the Malian army.



M1: Formal Bilateral Military Engagements

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **There has historically been a lack of formal bilateral military engagements between Mali and Russia.**
 - » Between 2012 and roughly 2020, there are few indications of formal Russian-Malian bilateral military engagements.
- **While Russian Army soldiers are in Mali in primarily advisory capacities, there are also indications of basing arrangements.**
 - » After the end of France's Operation Barkhane in November 2022, Russia deployed troops to Timbuktu at the request of Goïta's government and occupied a former French base, with a primary goal of training the Malian Army.^{67 68}
 - » There has been disagreement about whether the Russia-affiliated troops in Mali supporting the Goïta government were official Russian military or Wagner forces.⁶⁹ Some reporting indicates that these presumed Russian troops may instead be Wagner contractors.⁷⁰
- **Moscow has opted to use Wagner forces in Mali but influence by regular Russian forces in Mali may increase or take the form of a restructured mercenary group more tightly controlled by Moscow following the revolt by the Wagner Group in 2023.**
 - » The Russian Ministry of Defense made a statement regarding Wagner forces turning in weapons to MoD personnel in Russia, and Wagner is reportedly not recruiting any new fighters.^{71 72}
 - » The Russian delegation's August 2023 visit to Mali that included Russian Deputy Defense Minister Yevkurov also included Russian military intelligence officer Andrei Averyanov and mercenary commander Konstantin Mirzayants. Open sources indicate this visit was part of a new power structure to oversee Russia-backed personnel in Mali, as well as other African countries.⁷³



M2: Shared Informal/Multilateral Military Engagements

Current Influence: Very High

Projected Influence: Steady

- **Russia has taken advantage of the end of Operation Barkhane and the MINUSMA mission to entrench and expand its influence.**
 - » After France ended Operation Barkhane,⁷⁴ Wagner strengthened its position in key areas of the country, such as near Kidal, to provide more direct support for the Malian Army in its campaign against northern rebels.^{75 76}
 - » After the UN Security Council unanimously voted in June 2023 to withdraw its MINUSMA peacekeeping forces in six months⁷⁷ Russia announced its "unstinting support" of Mali.⁷⁸
 - » Similar to its efforts to replace French forces, Wagner started to move troops into positions in Mali to replace the exiting UN troops.⁷⁹
 - » As of June 2023, over 1,000 Wagner personnel were estimated to be in Mali.⁸⁰
- **Today, Russia exerts a substantial degree of informal military influence in Mali using Wagner, which supports the Goïta regime's fight against jihadists associated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.**
 - » Wagner was confirmed to be in Mali in December 2021, with the groundwork of its involvement starting as early as February 2020.⁸¹
 - » A base was constructed near the Modibo Keita International Airport in Bamako as a staging ground for Wagner forces.⁸²
 - » Wagner's activities in Mali have taken multiple forms, including training Malian troops, preserving Goïta's

power, providing reinforcements to Malian security forces, and potentially exploiting natural resources, such as gold.^{83 84}

- » In addition to its official operations, Wagner mercenaries in Mali have been accused of torture, extrajudicial killings, and sexual violence against citizens.⁸⁵
- **The security vacuum left after the conclusion of the MINUSMA effort in Mali has already likely been filled by Russia-backed military forces, indicating that the very high level of Russian influence via this instrument will remain steady for the next three years.**



M3: Defense/Security Pacts and Agreements

Current Influence: Low

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **Mali and Russia share various defense and security cooperation agreements. While some of these existed before the Goïta regime, several have deepened under his leadership.**
 - » In 2019, Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Shoigu and then-Malian Minister of Defense General Ibrahim Dahiru Dembele signed an intergovernmental agreement on military cooperation.⁸⁶ Specific details on the agreement were not publicized, but similar Russian agreements signed with other African nations have typically included providing weapons and training in counterterrorism.⁸⁷
 - » In 2022, Mali announced a new security cooperation agreement with Russia covering security, intelligence, disaster management, drugs, and training, signed by Russian Deputy Interior Minister Igor Zubov and Malian Minister of Security and Civil Protection Daoud Ali Mohammedine.⁸⁸
 - » In a 2023 trip to Mali, Lavrov stated Russia would boost bilateral military cooperation.⁸⁹ As of November 2023, there have been no additional formal security cooperation agreements.
- **Russia has consistently expressed support for defense cooperation with Mali, suggesting a future increase in Russian influence via this instrument in the next three years.**

E - Economic Influence

From 2012 to 2023, Russia has been Mali's top arms supplier by a wide margin, which is currently the most significant means of Moscow's military economic influence in the country. In addition to arms, Russia has also sold large quantities of hydrocarbons to Mali, likely in a bid to offset the impact of international sanctions. Additionally, there have been multiple open-source reports of interest in Malian gold mines by the Wagner Group and other Russian companies.



E1: Arms Transfers

Current Influence: Very High

Projected Influence: Steady

- **Between 2012 and 2023, Russia has been Mali's top arms supplier.**
 - » Approximately 80 percent of military equipment that Mali purchased from 2012-2023 originated from Russia.^{90 91}
 - » Mali has increased military-related orders from Russia since 2020, primarily consisting of fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft like the Su-25 and Mi-8T.⁹²
 - » Since the onset of the Goïta regime, Mali has purchased combat aircraft, air search radar, and transport aircraft from Russia.⁹³
- **In light of statements by Malian government officials, Bamako's reliance on Russian arms is likely to remain very high, facilitating Russia's significant influence via this instrument over the next three years.**
 - » In March 2023, Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop stated that the West has "despicable" standards for supplying weapons to Africa, so Mali will rely on countries like Russia.⁹⁴



E2: Technology-Sharing and Joint Production Agreements

Current Influence: Unobserved

Projected Influence: Unknown

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



E3: Trade and Cooperation in Strategic Commodities/Sectors

Current Influence: Medium

Projected Influence: Increasing

- **Russia has committed to providing large quantities of needed strategic commodities to Mali.**
 - » In 2023, Vladimir Putin promised approximately \$100 million in commodities like food, fuel, and fertilizer.⁹⁵
 - » Russia has looked to Mali as an alternative consumer for its oil exports while under international sanctions.⁹⁶ The sale of oil, along with other strategic commodities, is an easy way for Russia to gain further influence in the developing nation.
 - » Russia has significantly increased exports to Mali since 2017, selling agricultural equipment and infrastructure materials, among other items.⁹⁷
- **Russia has secured a formal partnership with Mali in relation to gold refining processes.**
 - » In November 2023, Mali announced a four-year agreement with Russia to build a gold refinery in Bamako with the ability to process 200 tons of gold a year, which would make it the largest in West Africa.⁹⁸
- **Russia's and Wagner's abilities to gain mining concessions in Mali, including access to certain mines and the refining process, offer it new forms of influence in Mali, including in its relations with the ruling junta.**
 - » During Lavrov's visit in February 2023, he also spoke about Russian interest in geological exploration and energy in Mali.⁹⁹
 - » Wagner forces entering Mali also included geologists.¹⁰⁰ The Wagner Group has secured exclusive mining rights for strategic commodities, such as gold, in other African nations where they are stationed.¹⁰¹ The presence of geologists suggests similar intentions for Mali.
 - » Globally, Wagner has been partially funded by illicit gold dealings. Andrey Nikolayevich Ivanov, a Wagner executive, has been integral in multiple deals involving mining and weapons throughout Africa, including Mali.¹⁰²
 - » Mali is the third largest gold producer in Africa, holding reserves worth over \$4 billion in 2021.¹⁰³ Open-

source reporting indicates that if Mali is unable to continue to pay for Wagner’s services, payment may take the form of gold mining rights.¹⁰⁴

- **Exports from Russia to Mali in strategic commodities, such as food and fuel, have increased steadily since 2017. With Bamako’s increased reliance on Moscow in sectors such as energy, Russia’s influence in Mali via this instrument is anticipated to increase over the next three years.**

CONCLUSIONS

Russia's current M-DIME influence in Mali is assessed as Medium. Russia relies heavily on Military and Economic instruments for military influence in Mali. Russian private military company the Wagner Group has become entrenched in Mali, moving to replace departing French and UN-sponsored MINUSMA forces and with no signs of leaving even after the 2023 Wagner revolt in Russia (M2). It also continues to be Mali's top arms supplier (E1).¹⁰⁵ Russian military influence in Mali has become increasingly overt. Russia's substantial M-DIME influence contributes to its "immediate threat to the free and open international system," according to the 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy.¹⁰⁶ Mali also plays an influential role in the affairs of other countries in the Sahel, such as Niger, where the United States bases some counterterrorism operations in Africa.¹⁰⁷

Russia's projected M-DIME influence in Mali is assessed as Increasing. Russia is projected to primarily employ Military, Diplomatic, and Economic instruments over the next three years. Bamako is quickly alienating Western nations that have historically tried to stabilize the region, leaving few options to aid in humanitarian and counterterrorism operations. Russia has increased its efforts to show a diplomatic commitment to Mali, with key visits by Sergei Lavrov and Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, likely to ensure stability with Russian forces stationed in the country (D1).^{108 109} Russia also appears to make this relationship a long-standing partnership, significantly increasing the availability of military training for Malian personnel through the Ministry of Defense.¹¹⁰ With the French withdrawal and MINUSMA efforts coming to an end, Mali will likely increase its ties to Russia. Wagner personnel have already begun expanding to former UN bases and bolstering Malian Army personnel in the country's fight against the northern rebels and jihadist terrorist groups associated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (M2).¹¹¹ Moscow has also shown significant interest in the Malian economy, using its economic power to increase its sphere of influence (E3).¹¹² Increased collaboration with Russia will also likely lead to an increase in the amount of arms supplied to Mali to conduct counterterrorism operations and secure the influence of the Goïta regime. Awareness of these areas of influence gives the United States opportunities to counter the threat Russia poses.¹¹³

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