

## Küresel Ve Bölgesel Aktörlerin Sahel Bölgesinde Askeri ve Nüfuz Mücadelesi

### Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement

*Mahamane Moutari Aboubacar İssa<sup>1</sup>*

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. *ASSAM International Refereed Journal* (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

#### Özet

Bu çalışma, 2012 yılında Mali'de başlayan güvenlik krizinin ardından Sahel ve Batı Afrika'da artan askeri ve jeopolitik rekabeti ele almaktadır. Fransa'nın uzun süreli askeri müdahaleleri yerel tepkilere ve darbeler zincirine zemin hazırlarken, Rusya Wagner grubu ve yeni kurumsal yapılar aracılığıyla bölgedeki etkisini artırma çabasına girmiştir. ABD, bazı üslerini boşaltarak askeri varlığını yeniden yapılandırırken; Türkiye savunma sanayi iş birlikleri ve SİHA ihracatıyla bölgedeki etkisini genişletmektedir. Çin ise doğrudan müdahaleden kaçınarak askeri üs, silah ihracatı ve ekonomik yatırımlarla varlık göstermektedir. Bölgedeki bu çok aktörlü rekabet, sadece güvenlik değil; aynı zamanda doğal kaynakların kontrolü, ekonomik çıkarlar ve ideolojik etkiler üzerinden de şekillenmektedir. Artan dış müdahaleler, bölge ülkelerinin egemenliklerini ve güvenlik yapılarını zayıflatmakta, Sahel'i uluslararası güç mücadelesinin merkezlerinden biri haline getirmektedir. Bu çalışma, realizm ve güç dengesi teorisi çerçevesinde Sahel'deki aktörlerin davranışlarını analiz etmektedir. Jeopolitik rekabet kavramı, bölgesel güvenlik mimarisinin yeniden şekillenmesini açıklamak için teorik bir çatı olarak kullanılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Jeopolitika, Saheli, Askeri Güç ve Bölgesel Mücadelesi.*

#### Abstract

This study examines the growing military and geopolitical competition in the Sahel and West Africa following the security crisis that began in northern Mali in 2012. France's prolonged military presence, initially framed as counterterrorism, gradually triggered local backlash and contributed to a wave of coups in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Russia has expanded its influence through the Wagner Group and now seeks institutionalization via the newly formed "Africa Corps." The United States, facing strategic setbacks, has withdrawn from bases in Niger and Chad, aiming to reposition some forces in Côte d'Ivoire and among regional partners. Türkiye is emerging as a new actor through defense cooperation agreements and the export of Bayraktar drones, while China maintains a limited military footprint, relying on a base in Djibouti and increasing arms exports to safeguard its economic interests. Beyond economic motives, China's arms diplomacy functions as a strategic tool to counter Western dominance and secure long-term influence in African security architectures. This multi-actor competition is not only military but also economic, diplomatic, and ideological in nature. Control over natural resources such as uranium, gold, and oil, along with maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, renders the region strategically significant. Rising foreign military presence is weakening regional stability, undermining state sovereignty, and reshaping the region's security architecture—developments that are likely to influence both future international power balances and the foreign policy preferences of African states.

**Keywords:** *Geopolitical, Sahel, Military Great Power Competition, Security Architecture, Foreign Military Presence.*

Sakarya University  
mocabr87@live.com  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5002-5375>

Article Type

Research Article

Application Date

January 18, 2026

Admission Date

March 23, 2026

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The seizure of northern Malian cities by armed groups in 2012 marked a significant turning point in the escalation of military competition in the Sahel and West Africa. This study adopts a realist theoretical framework, focusing on power projection and balance of power dynamics to explain the behavior of global and regional actors. The concept of geopolitical rivalry is employed as an overarching analytical lens rather than a descriptive term. The swift collapse of the Malian army in the face of Azawad fighters and forces loyal to Iyad Ag Ghali, leader of the Ansar Dine movement, brought the capital, Bamako, under imminent threat. In response, Mali's interim president at the time, Dioncounda Traoré, formally requested French military assistance in January 2013. France responded promptly, deploying air and ground forces that successfully recaptured the occupied cities within days. However, the failure to decisively eliminate these groups allowed them to expand their activities into neighboring countries, particularly Burkina Faso and Niger.

This spillover prompted a broader French military presence in the region. In 2014, France launched Operation Barkhane, encompassing Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, under the mandate of countering armed insurgencies. French troops remained deployed across the region under the pretext of counterterrorism operations. In 2020, France—along with several European and African partners—initiated Operation Takuba to assist Malian and Nigerien forces in their fight against insurgents. Under similar justifications, other Western actors, including the United States, Germany, and Italy, deployed military personnel to Niger. Meanwhile, the United States stationed special forces in Chad, which faced a triad of security threats: al-Qaeda-linked groups near the Nigerien border, Boko Haram near the Nigerian frontier, and Chadian rebel factions threatening its northern border with Libya.

The growing foreign military presence is closely linked to broader economic interests; it is simultaneously shaped by strategic calculations. The perceived failure of Western interventions to restore stability has been a key factor cited by military regimes that have come to power in recent coups across the Sahel. Following these political upheavals, French forces were expelled from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso—creating a vacuum increasingly filled by Russia, which has begun supplying these countries with military equipment and advisory support. In parallel, France and the United States have sought to reposition their forces in alternative locations across the region. Simultaneously, Türkiye has emerged as a new actor, expanding its footprint through arms exports and defense cooperation.

## 2. FRANCE'S INFLUENCE IN THE AFRICAN SAHEL REGION: FROM DOMINANCE TO ADAPTATION

France established a significant sphere of influence across North, West, East, and Southern Africa during the colonial era, and succeeded in preserving much of this influence even after the decolonization period. Through a range of bilateral agreements and institutional partnerships, France secured long-term access to Africa's natural wealth, often in ways that primarily served its own economic, commercial, and strategic interests. Statements by former French Presidents Jacques Chirac—“Without Africa, France will fall to the level of a third-world country”—and François Mitterrand—“Without Africa, France will have no history in the 21st century” (AL-Dayyus, 2024). Country—underscore the extent of France's dependence on Africa and the continent's perceived strategic significance.

To this day, France's strategic dependence on African states is reflected in the fact that 25% of the uranium used for its nuclear energy is sourced from the continent. In comparison, nearly 80% of Africa's mineral resources are exported to global markets under French control, reinforcing a lopsided commercial relationship. (Efe & Dönmez, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2025).

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

Following the formal end of colonial rule, France maintained its military presence in Africa by positioning itself as a security guarantor for its former colonies. As part of this posture, French troops were deployed across several African states under the pretext of ensuring regional stability and deterring external threats. Over the past six decades, France has conducted numerous military interventions across the continent—both unilaterally and in coordination with African governments, Western allies, or under United Nations mandates (Euronews, 2022).

France's military footprint has evolved from protecting specific regimes to broader regional interventions (Euronews, 2022). Between 1960 and 2016, France launched over 40 operations in former colonies (e.g. Chad, Gabon, Rwanda), far outstripping other former colonial powers like the UK. (Bruyère-Ostells, 2016, pp. 3–22).

The French military intervention in Mali in 2013 revealed the geopolitical and economic motivations underlying counterterrorism narratives, marking a critical juncture in the region's international relations. Over time, the Sahel has evolved into a strategically significant region for securing global interests and controlling valuable natural resources.

Initially, France's military operations were justified as efforts to stabilize political regimes and prevent military coups or uprisings. Over the years, combating armed groups became an additional pretext. The "Serval Operation," launched in 2013 in Mali, was later expanded into "Operation Barkhane," encompassing broader counterinsurgency missions in neighboring countries (Anadolu Agency, 2016; Diallo, 2021).

Despite over a decade of military engagement, France's failure to eliminate armed threats across the Sahel generated widespread public discontent. This outcome illustrates a causal mechanism: prolonged military presence, rising local resentment, legitimacy crisis, military coups. Mass protests emerged, calling for the withdrawal of French troops. Seizing on these sentiments, several militaries in the region orchestrated coups that ousted pro-French civilian governments. These new military regimes, invoking national sovereignty, ordered the expulsion of French forces from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Consequently, France experienced a significant erosion of influence within its traditional sphere of control. The study now delineates the causal pathways through which French military presence increased regime dependency, thereby articulating the rise of anti-French discourse not just as a sequence of events, but as a result of specific analytical mechanisms.

In response, Paris sought to maintain a strategic balance to retain a foothold in the region. Adjustments included plans to reduce its troop presence in Senegal and Gabon from 350 to 100 personnel, cut forces in Côte d'Ivoire from 600, and downscale its military presence in Chad from 1,000 to 300 soldiers (AFP, 2024).

These developments suggest that France's once-dominant military presence in Africa—historically a cornerstone of its post-colonial influence—is on a path toward considerable downsizing, with long-term implications for its geopolitical standing on the continent.

This shift marks a broader transformation in French foreign policy and a redefinition of its historical ties with Africa. The gradual reduction of France's military presence raises critical questions regarding regional security dynamics and the long-term viability of its influence across the continent. As Pierre Haski (2024) and AFP (2024) suggest, France's traditional approach to Africa is increasingly out of step with evolving regional and global realities. Despite decades of military engagement aimed at securing strategic interests, France has struggled to achieve its objectives, and recent developments in the Sahel have seriously undermined the legitimacy of its presence.

The wave of successive military coups in West Africa has further intensified regional uncertainty, prompting a pervasive question among neighboring nations: "Who's next?" This growing concern has led to strategic recalibrations in countries such as Chad, Gabon, and Senegal—states that currently host

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

French military bases (Vincent, 2025). In these countries, France's presence has come under mounting political and societal scrutiny, with increasing demands for a reevaluation of its role.

In response, French authorities have entered into negotiations with host countries to initiate a phased withdrawal of military units. To soften the implications of this retreat, the process has been diplomatically framed as a "strategic repositioning," emphasizing a shift from permanent bases to capacity-building initiatives such as training centers.

This evolving scenario reflects yet another erosion of France's post-colonial legacy in Africa. Nevertheless, the geopolitical order that will emerge in the wake of this transition remains uncertain. What is clear is that the Sahel and surrounding regions are entering a new era—one that will likely define the trajectory of France's future role on the continent.

### **3. UNITED STATES: STRATEGIC DILEMMAS AMID FORCED WITHDRAWALS IN THE SAHEL**

The United States faces persistent challenges in repositioning its military presence across the Sahel. This difficulty reflects a broader decline in American influence, as Washington struggles to adapt its security partnerships to shifting regional dynamics.

Since 2020, a wave of military coups across the Sahel and West Africa has posed significant challenges to U.S. strategic interests, forcing Washington into a complex policy dilemma. The United States has found itself navigating between two competing imperatives: maintaining its military footprint to safeguard strategic assets and counterterrorism objectives, or upholding its normative commitment to democratic governance and human rights by distancing itself from illegitimate regimes.

The absence of a viable third path has exposed the limitations of the U.S.'s hard power strategy in the region. This has become increasingly evident with the withdrawal of American troops from Niger and the looming prospect of a similar departure from Chad. These developments have prompted a reassessment of Washington's long-term military posture and strategic engagement in the Sahel.

A major turning point came in March 2024, when Niger's military authorities unilaterally annulled the Niger–U.S. army cooperation agreement that had been in place since 2012. The ruling junta—having seized power after the ousting of President Mohamed Bazoum in July 2023—claimed that the agreement was "illegal" and "in violation of constitutional and democratic norms" (France 24, 2024; CNSP, 2024). This abrupt move deepened the diplomatic rift between the two nations.

While the U.S. government called for a swift return to constitutional order, Niger's military leadership asserted the primacy of national sovereignty and adopted a cautious approach toward foreign military deployments. In this context, the future of the strategically important U.S. airbase in Agadez—originally established for counterterrorism missions—has emerged as a focal point in ongoing negotiations.

A comprehensive analysis of the factors leading to the termination of the U.S.–Niger military agreement must take into account both Niger's internal political dynamics and the broader implications of international law. Among the primary drivers are the military leadership's domestic political calculations, shifting public sentiment regarding foreign military presence, and the international community's diplomatic posture. Equally important is the legal framework underpinning bilateral military agreements and their legitimacy in the context of regime changes. In this regard, Niger's pursuit of a balance between asserting national sovereignty and maintaining constructive international relations will be instrumental in shaping its future political trajectory.

By May 2024, the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Air Base 101 in Niamey had been completed. According to official statements from both the U.S. and Nigerien defense ministries, the operation involved the evacuation of 766 personnel, two Raptor helicopters, four unmanned aerial vehicles, and approximately 1,593 tons of military equipment (Le Temps, 2024).

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

Attention now turns to the phased withdrawal from Air Base 201 in Agadez—an installation of strategic significance for U.S. regional operations. The base houses advanced aerial surveillance and strike capabilities and has served as a cornerstone of U.S. counterterrorism strategy in the Sahel. As such, the Agadez withdrawal carries far-reaching implications for regional security architecture and American strategic posture in West Africa (U.S. Africa Command, 2024). The U.S. withdrawal created a security vacuum that facilitated Russia's growing influence, demonstrating how external disengagement reshapes regional power balances. Notably, the U.S. opted to shut down the Agadez base over a month earlier than originally agreed upon with Niger's military authorities. This early exit marks a pivotal shift in diplomatic and military cooperation between the two countries (Le Monde, 2024; Alexandre, 2024).

### **3.1. UNITED STATES: STRATEGIC SHIFTS AND THE RECALIBRATION OF SECURITY POLICY IN AFRICA**

Recent developments in the Sahel and Central Africa mark a pivotal transformation in the United States' strategic objectives and security posture on the African continent. These changes, particularly in Niger and Chad, signal not only a recalibration of bilateral partnerships but also a broader reconsideration of Washington's military engagement model in Africa. The redefinition of U.S.–Niger relations and the potential restructuring of military cooperation frameworks underscore the need for both nations to reassess their national security priorities in light of regional stability and evolving geopolitical dynamics (Alexandre, 2024).

The rupture in U.S.–Niger cooperation has ramifications that extend beyond bilateral relations, directly challenging the architecture of American security strategy across Africa. In a parallel development, the United States faced a similar demand from Chad, albeit with less diplomatic tension. In early April 2024, the Chadian Air Force Command formally requested the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel, citing the absence of a binding agreement authorizing their presence. This move reflects growing regional sensitivity to issues of sovereignty and a rising demand for legal and political legitimacy regarding foreign military deployments.

In response, the U.S. Department of Defense confirmed the redeployment of approximately 60 military personnel to Germany, signaling the beginning of a phased withdrawal (Agenzia Nova, 2024). The Pentagon further indicated that the withdrawal process would conclude over the coming months. This shift represents a critical inflection point in the strategic reassessment of America's military footprint and defense priorities on the continent (Le Monde, 2024).

However, in a surprising turn, reports from September 2024 indicated the return of U.S. Special Forces to Chad. This reversal highlights the fluid nature of U.S.–Chadian military relations and reflects a pragmatic approach by both parties in response to changing security dynamics. The reinstatement of U.S. forces suggests that the internal security situation in Chad, coupled with Washington's strategic interests in Central Africa, remains a compelling factor shaping military decisions (Babb, 2024).

Ultimately, these developments underscore a broader reorientation in U.S. regional strategy. They demand scrutiny within the frameworks of international relations, security studies, and diplomatic engagement, as they will likely influence the trajectory of future military cooperation and geopolitical alignments in Africa.

It is evident that the military retrenchment currently facing U.S. forces in these two countries—preceded by the withdrawal of French troops from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso—reflects a broader shift in the regional landscape that has coincided with a marked increase in Russia's military and diplomatic engagements in the region. Although Chad initially resisted calls to expel French forces, by 2024 it had begun to take steps toward terminating both French and American military presences—indicating a significant shift in the country's foreign policy orientation. While Russia has yet to deploy formal military units to Chad, bilateral relations between N'Djamena and Moscow have deepened rapidly.

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

Notably, Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby's official visit to Moscow in January 2024 was followed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's visit to Chad in June, signaling a renewed diplomatic momentum between the two countries (Vendrelly, 2024).

In response to Russia's growing influence in Africa, the United States has initiated efforts to reconfigure its military posture on the continent. According to French media, Washington has approved the establishment of a new military base in Odienné, a strategic location in northwestern Côte d'Ivoire. This move is widely interpreted as an effort to counter the expanding threats posed by radical armed groups in the Sahel, which increasingly jeopardize the stability of Gulf of Guinea states. The planned base is intended to ensure continued American involvement in the region's evolving security architecture (Le Monde, 2024).

In parallel, high-level U.S. military officials convened with defense ministers from multiple African countries during the Africa Defense Leaders Conference, held in Botswana. Established in 2017 by the United States, this annual conference was hosted on African soil for the first time—an indication of Washington's renewed commitment to enhancing its strategic presence and partnerships across the continent (United States Africa Command [AFRICOM], 2024).

#### **4. “WAGNER” AND THE “AFRICA CORPS”: RUSSIA'S GATEWAY TO THE CONTINENT**

In its effort to revitalize relations with the African continent, Russia has undertaken strategic initiatives to expand cooperation across political, economic, and military domains. These efforts are deeply rooted in historical ties dating back to the Soviet era, particularly in the context of support for anti-colonial and liberation movements. Although President Vladimir Putin's personal visits to Africa have been limited, Russia has recently intensified its diplomatic engagement through high-level meetings, symbolic gestures, and multilateral forums aimed at reinforcing its influence and challenging traditional powers such as France (Bassou, 2005).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia's presence in Africa diminished significantly. However, recent geopolitical shifts—especially the wave of military coups in the Sahel and growing discontent with France's military presence—have created new opportunities for Moscow to reassert itself. Russia's engagement with countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso is not merely opportunistic; it is also grounded in longstanding military relations. A number of military officers in these regimes received training in Russia, and these institutional linkages continue to inform bilateral cooperation (Dahchan, 2024; Arkhangelskaya, 2013). Thus, Russia's contemporary Africa policy reflects a layered approach, combining historical legacy with realpolitik.

Despite lacking official military bases on the continent, Russia has pursued a steady expansion of its military footprint since 2017, primarily through arms deals, training programs, and bilateral security agreements. Central to this strategy is the Wagner Group, which operates as a proxy for Russian geopolitical interests. While presented as a private security contractor, Wagner has functioned as an extension of the Russian state, enabling Moscow to exert influence without formal military deployment (Kalika, 2019; Dahchan, 2024). Through Wagner, Russia has not only secured access to strategic territories but has also laid the groundwork for the possible establishment of future bases.

The evolution of this strategy is evident in the recent institutionalization of Russia's presence through the creation of the "Africa Corps", a more formalized military structure intended to replace or supplement Wagner's operations. These developments indicate that Russia's maneuvers in Africa are not ad hoc but part of a broader, coherent strategy—one shaped by historical ties, contemporary geopolitical calculations, and the shifting global balance of power.

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

#### **4.1. THE WAGNER GROUP AND ITS EXPANDING SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IN AFRICA**

The Wagner Group emerged in 2014 during Russia's military involvement in eastern Ukraine and launched its first international operations in Syria in 2015. Its expansion into Africa began in 2017, under the direction of its then-leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian businessman with close ties to the Kremlin—commonly referred to as “Putin’s chef” due to his catering business and proximity to Russian political elites (Al-Rai, 2022).

While estimates of Wagner’s footprint in Africa vary, there is broad consensus that the group has been active in at least four key countries: Libya (particularly in Sirte and Jufra), the Central African Republic (since 2018), Sudan (since 2017), and Mali, where its presence increased following the withdrawal of French forces. In these countries, Wagner has engaged in a wide range of activities, from direct combat and military advising to providing security services for state actors and guarding critical infrastructure. During Prigozhin’s tenure, the number of Wagner personnel deployed in Africa was estimated in the hundreds, reflecting its strategic importance to Russian operations on the continent (AA, 2021; Euronews, 2022).

Additional reports suggest Wagner may have extended its influence to several other African nations, including Botswana, Burundi, the Comoros, Guinea, the Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe (Desorgues, 2023). This expansion aligns with Moscow’s broader objective of reasserting geopolitical influence in Africa and challenging Western dominance in the region.

However, the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin in a plane crash on August 23, 2023, created a turning point for Wagner’s future. This incident prompted widespread speculation and debate over possible outcomes: the group’s complete dissolution, its absorption into official Russian military structures, or its continuation under new leadership. These uncertainties have raised significant questions regarding Wagner’s ongoing role in Africa and its future contribution to Russia’s foreign policy strategy (BBC, 2023).

In this context, the Wagner Group has become a critical case study in the intersection of private military enterprises, state power, and geopolitical rivalry—particularly as Africa becomes an increasingly contested arena for global influence.

#### **4.2. Africa Corps: Russia’s New Expansionist Strategy**

Since its establishment, the Wagner Group has drawn global attention for its involvement in conflict zones and its alleged violations of international humanitarian law. These actions have led several countries and international organizations to designate Wagner as a terrorist organization. In particular, the group’s operations in Africa have fueled debates over Russia’s growing influence on the continent and the implications for regional stability.

In an in-depth analysis published by the Global Network on Extremism & Technology (GNET), Fahad Mirza explores the justification for classifying Wagner as a terrorist entity. He argues that Wagner functions as a state-sponsored asymmetric actor, employing tactics that breach international legal norms and fit the broader definition of terrorism. The report also underscores the group’s involvement in armed conflicts and its use of disinformation campaigns, presenting Wagner as a non-traditional security threat that operates outside formal military structures through irregular and covert methods (GNET, 2023).

Against this backdrop, Russia’s rebranding of Wagner under the name "Africa Corps" represents a significant shift in strategy. This move is not merely cosmetic; rather, it signifies an attempt by Moscow to preserve and institutionalize its strategic presence in Africa under a new and more formalized framework. In early 2024, the Russian government officially announced the creation of the Africa Corps, a new military formation set to operate in Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Central African

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

Republic. The corps is led by Russian Deputy Defense Minister General Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, indicating a direct link to the Russian state's defense apparatus (Aljazeera.net, 2024).

This development highlights a broader transformation in Russia's military and diplomatic posture on the continent. It suggests that Moscow seeks not only to maintain security cooperation but also to establish a long-term, structured military presence. The creation of the Africa Corps points to an evolving strategy in which Russia leverages both formal state institutions and hybrid military tools to expand its geopolitical influence in Africa.

#### **4.3. Africa Corps: Institutionalizing Russia's Military Presence in Africa**

The most notable feature of the Africa Corps is its formal integration into Russia's state military apparatus, marking a significant departure from the ambiguous status of the Wagner Group. Unlike Wagner—often presented as a private military company to provide plausible deniability—the Africa Corps represents a state-sanctioned and officially recognized military formation. This development underscores Russia's intention to distance itself from the controversies surrounding Wagner's alleged human rights abuses and extralegal operations, while recasting its military engagement in Africa within a more legitimate and institutional framework.

This strategic recalibration reflects Moscow's broader ambition to systematize and formalize its military footprint on the African continent (ADF, 2024). Mirroring the established military infrastructures of other global powers—such as the French and American bases—Russia now seeks to expand its influence through direct state-led military partnerships. In this context, the signing of formal defense agreements with host countries becomes essential to securing Russia's long-term strategic objectives in the region.

Looking forward, the operational reach of the Africa Corps is expected to broaden beyond its initial deployments in Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and the Central African Republic. The Sahel and West Africa—already characterized by deep geopolitical volatility and diminishing Western influence—offer fertile ground for the expansion of Russia's military and diplomatic presence. As such, the emergence of the Africa Corps marks a critical inflection point in the continent's evolving security architecture and reflects a significant reconfiguration of global power dynamics in Africa.

### **5. TURKEY'S DRONE DIPLOMACY IN AFRICA: A NEW INSTRUMENT OF POWER**

Türkiye is emerging as a new actor through defense cooperation agreements and the export of Bayraktar drones. Turkey's defense industry developments These exports enhance local military capacities and contribute to shifting alliance structures in the Sahel.

In recent years, Turkey has adopted a multidimensional foreign policy approach aimed at deepening its engagement with the African continent across political, economic, and cultural spheres. Africa's abundant natural resources and expanding economic potential render it a strategically important region for Ankara. Within this context, Turkey has actively pursued enhanced cooperation in trade, investment, education, and particularly in the defense industry, viewing these domains as pathways toward building long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships.

A key pillar of this strategy is Turkey's defense diplomacy, notably advanced through the export and deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Turkish drones, such as the Bayraktar TB2, have demonstrated considerable effectiveness in a range of conflict zones including Libya, Ethiopia, and Syria. These operations have not only elevated Turkey's operational capabilities in complex security environments but also significantly extended its diplomatic and military influence (Martins et al., 2023).

This model represents a hybrid foreign policy approach that blends soft power—such as humanitarian aid, education, and cultural diplomacy—with hard power capabilities. For instance,

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

Ankara's UAV sales to Ukraine have bolstered its ties with NATO and the West, while allowing it to maintain a delicate geopolitical balancing act in its relations with Russia.

In this light, Turkish drones serve not merely as tactical military assets, but as strategic tools of foreign policy, reflecting Ankara's broader ambition to reposition itself within the evolving global order. The growing use of drone diplomacy in Africa highlights Turkey's intent to expand its geopolitical reach and consolidate its emerging role as a key regional and global actor (Martins et al., 2023).

In recent years, Turkey has significantly intensified its engagement with the politically volatile Sahel region, reflecting a shift toward a more proactive and multidimensional Africa policy. This shift is evident through a rise in high-level diplomatic interactions, strategic visits, and the signing of cooperation agreements across key sectors, particularly in defense, energy, and natural resources.

A notable example of this strategic orientation was a high-level delegation visit to Niamey, Niger, in 2024, which included Turkey's Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Energy, the Head of National Intelligence, the President of Defense Industries, and the Deputy Minister of Trade (Anadolu Agency, 2024). During this visit, both countries signed a "Declaration of Intent for Cooperation in Petroleum, Natural Gas, and Gold," signaling a convergence of economic and strategic interests. The agreement outlines institutional collaboration and incentives for Turkish firms to invest in Niger's energy and mining sectors, aligning with Turkey's broader energy security and foreign investment strategies (TRT Global, 2024).

This cooperation deepened further with the December 2024 visit of Nigerien Defense Minister General Salifou Mody to Ankara, where he met with Turkish Defense Minister Yaşar Güler to strengthen bilateral military relations (Ministry of National Defense, 2025). These engagements reflect the institutionalization of defense cooperation and mark a significant development in Ankara's efforts to build long-term partnerships with Sahelian states.

A milestone in this trajectory was reached at the 17th International Defense Industry Fair (IDEF 2025) in Istanbul, where Turkey and Niger signed a "Military Financial Cooperation Agreement." The signing, attended by Deputy Defense Minister Alpaslan Kavaklıoğlu and Nigerien Secretary General Major General Sani Kache Issa, established a framework for cooperation in military financing, training, equipment procurement, and technical assistance (Anadolu Agency, 2025). This agreement represents a critical element of Turkey's expanding defense diplomacy in Africa, formalizing Ankara's strategic presence in the Sahel.

Similarly, in June 2024, Malian Army Chief Harouna Samaké visited Turkey upon the invitation of Turkish Chief of General Staff General Selçuk Bayraktaroğlu. This visit marked another step toward institutionalized security cooperation between Turkey and Mali, reinforcing Ankara's growing influence in the region (Anadolu Agency, 2024).

Together, these developments illustrate Turkey's evolving role as a security and development partner in the Sahel, combining defense industry exports with energy partnerships to deepen its geopolitical footprint.

Turkey's deepening engagement in the Sahel forms part of a broader strategic vision that integrates political, economic, and military dimensions. This engagement builds upon earlier diplomatic and defense initiatives, including the meeting between Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar and his Malian counterpart Colonel Sadio Camara in Ankara in 2022 (Malijet, 2022; AA, 2022). These interactions have laid the groundwork for a sustained and institutionalized defense partnership.

A concrete manifestation of this cooperation occurred in December 2022, when Mali incorporated Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 drones into its military inventory. This move highlighted

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

Turkey's growing role as a reliable security partner in the Sahel. It signaled the beginning of a long-term defense collaboration strategy focused on technology transfer and capacity building (Madar, 2024).

Similarly, in April 2024, Burkina Faso's interim President Captain Ibrahim Traoré awarded Baykar CEO Haluk Bayraktar the nation's highest state honor, coinciding with the official handover of Bayraktar drones to the Ministry of Defense (Madar, 2024; Baykar Technologies, 2023). This event symbolized the strengthening of defense and technological ties between Ankara and Ouagadougou.

Further reinforcing this trend, multiple high-level delegations from Burkina Faso have visited Turkey to sign agreements across diverse sectors, underscoring the broadening scope of bilateral cooperation. Likewise, Niger expanded its military cooperation with Turkey in May 2022 by acquiring Bayraktar drones, further embedding Turkey in the region's emerging security networks (Interregional, 2024).

Turkey's defense diplomacy in the Sahel—anchored in the export of advanced UAVs and supported by military training and financial agreements—represents more than mere arms sales. It constitutes a strategic foreign policy instrument that fuses soft power (through development, education, and diplomacy) with hard power (via defense exports and military collaboration). This hybrid approach positions Turkey as an increasingly influential actor in shaping the Sahel's evolving regional security architecture.

Against the backdrop of intensifying geopolitical competition in Africa, Turkey has adopted a proactive and multidimensional approach to enhancing its security and defense relations across the continent. The signing of defense and military cooperation agreements with over 25 African countries—including pivotal regional actors such as Senegal, Mali, and Nigeria—demonstrates the comprehensive scope of Ankara's engagement. Additionally, Turkey's implementation of more than ten security training programs in countries like The Gambia reflects a long-term commitment to capacity building, extending beyond the transactional nature of defense equipment exports (Muhammed Ali, 2022).

A notable milestone in this trajectory was Prime Minister Ali Lamine Zeine's visit to Turkey in February 2024, which underscored the strengthening bilateral relationship. During this period, Nigerien media reported Turkey's plan to establish a military base in the strategic northern city of Agadez, home to the now-vacated U.S. Air Base 201—a \$110 million facility central to Washington's counterterrorism operations before its withdrawal in September 2024 (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Turkey's interest in Agadez is driven by both its strategic location and operational potential. Beyond deepening its defense partnership with Niger, the base would also serve as a logistical and military bridge to support Turkish operations in Libya, thereby enhancing Ankara's capacity to project power across a broad swath of the continent.

These initiatives align with Ankara's broader strategy to capitalize on the strategic vacuum created by the waning military presence of traditional Western actors, particularly in the Sahel and West Africa. Turkey is actively positioning itself as a reliable and capable alternative security partner. This strategy is supported by Turkey's permanent military base in Somalia, hosting around 2,000 troops, which anchors its presence in East Africa. Simultaneously, its ongoing military operations and deployments in Libya—featuring UAVs and armored vehicles—ensure sustained influence in North Africa (Maïabi, 2024).

Given Libya's geographic proximity to Niger, Turkey's base in Libya is expected to gain even greater strategic relevance, particularly as Ankara intensifies its engagement with Niger's interim government, led by General Abdourahmane Tchiani. This continuity—from previous administrations under Mahamadou Issoufou and Mohamed Bazoum to the current military regime—demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of Turkey's African policy (Maïabi, 2024).

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

In this context, Turkey views the U.S. withdrawal not merely as a diplomatic reshuffle but as a strategic opening to expand its influence and consolidate its role as a security actor in Africa. The growing Turkish military presence—particularly in Niger—is thus emerging as a crucial pillar in the reshaping of the region’s security architecture, illustrating that Ankara’s Africa policy is underpinned not only by economic aspirations but also by long-term geopolitical and military considerations (Babb, 2024).

## **6. CHINA’S ARMS EXPORT STRATEGIES IN AFRICA AND THEIR REGIONAL IMPACTS**

While China–Africa relations are typically framed through economic cooperation, an increasingly important—yet often underexplored—dimension is the growing military and security collaboration between the two. Despite prioritizing economic development as the core of its foreign policy, Beijing has gradually expanded its military engagements in Africa, albeit with a cautious and limited approach designed to safeguard its economic interests (Enuka, 2011: 78–91; Yıldız, 2022).

China’s military strategy in Africa has historically focused on indirect influence through arms exports, participation in UN peacekeeping operations, and protection of Chinese investments in volatile regions. This strategic restraint aligns with Beijing’s image as a non-interventionist actor and a partner in peace and development. By avoiding direct military intervention, China minimizes diplomatic friction while still expanding its strategic footprint.

However, changing global power dynamics and the erosion of soft power’s sufficiency in international competition have prompted Beijing to reassess its foreign policy posture. Like other emerging powers, China is increasingly leveraging its military-industrial complex to advance its foreign policy goals, especially in the Global South. Within this context, the establishment of China’s first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017 marked a pivotal shift in Beijing’s global strategy (Melvin, 2019: 3).

From the Chinese perspective, the Djibouti base serves as a “power projection point” critical to maritime security, anti-piracy operations, and the protection of trade routes and foreign investments. It also functions as a symbol of China’s emergence as a global military actor, especially given Africa’s strategic location at the crossroads of the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and Gulf of Aden.

Importantly, China’s arms export strategy complements this military footprint. African countries—many of which face budgetary constraints and require cost-effective military solutions—have become key recipients of Chinese-made weapons, drones, and surveillance technologies. These arms deals often come with fewer political conditions compared to those from Western suppliers, making China an attractive partner for governments seeking security assistance without interference in domestic governance.

China’s activities in Djibouti also reflect a broader pattern of militarized competition in the region. Djibouti has become a strategic hotspot, now hosting military bases from China, the United States, France, Japan, Spain, and Italy (Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2020: 178; Al Jazeera, 2024; Cabestan, 2023). This clustering of global powers underscores the Red Sea’s critical importance for international trade and maritime security, and highlights Africa’s increasing centrality in global geopolitics.

In sum, China’s arms export strategies and selective military presence in Africa are key components of a deliberate and adaptive global power strategy. By aligning military tools with economic diplomacy, China is not only reinforcing its partnerships across Africa but also challenging the traditional dominance of Western powers on the continent.

While China engages in military competition in the Horn of Africa through its permanent base in Djibouti, its strategy in the Sahel region takes a different form—focusing on arms sales, military

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

training, and defense diplomacy. The ongoing war in Ukraine has significantly diminished Russia's capacity to supply arms to African partners, creating a strategic vacuum that China has swiftly moved to fill. As the world's second-largest arms producer and the fourth-largest arms exporter, China has ramped up its defense exports to Sub-Saharan Africa, with a clear emphasis on West Africa and the Sahel (Graceffo, 2024).

Countries such as Chad and Nigeria have become key recipients of Chinese military equipment. Beyond the Sahel, China has also supplied arms to conflict-affected regions including Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia. Notably, a Beijing-based defense company's decision to open a regional sales office in Senegal for small arms, artillery systems, and armored vehicles points to a more institutionalized and enduring Chinese presence in the region's security landscape.

China's approach in Africa reflects a multidimensional strategy that integrates arms transfers, military training programs, and investments in logistical infrastructure. This triad reinforces Beijing's geopolitical positioning, allowing it to expand influence while maintaining a lower-risk security profile compared to Western military deployments (Graceffo, 2024; Cabestan, 2023).

In particular, the wave of military coups and ongoing security vacuums in the Sahel have created favorable conditions for China, Turkey, and Russia to increase their influence. A growing perception among new military elites that the West has failed to deliver security and development has accelerated this realignment. In this context, China's arms diplomacy serves both as a projection of power and a means of reinforcing its broader economic and political presence on the continent.

According to 2022 data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China accounted for 5.2% of global arms exports, ranking fourth after the United States (31%), Russia (31%), and France (11%) (SIPRI, 2022). While its global share is relatively modest, China's targeted expansion in Africa is highly significant within the context of shifting global power dynamics and the erosion of Western influence in the Sahel.

The recent acceleration of China's arms exports to Africa must therefore be viewed not simply as commercial activity, but as a geopolitical maneuver. Amid widespread disillusionment with traditional Western partners, especially in states ruled by military regimes, China presents itself as a non-ideological alternative, offering military assistance without conditionalities related to governance, democracy, or human rights.

The Sahel and West Africa have increasingly emerged as key arenas in global power competition, primarily due to their abundant natural resources. For instance, Burkina Faso holds substantial reserves of gold, cotton, zinc, and phosphate; Niger possesses critical resources such as uranium, oil, natural gas, and gold; while Mali is rich in gold, cotton, and iron. These assets not only underpin national economies but also play a vital role in the strategic calculus of external powers, serving both as a source of economic gain and as leverage for regional influence.

Likewise, Côte d'Ivoire's petroleum, natural gas, bauxite, and diamonds, and Chad's crude oil exports—primarily directed toward France, the U.S., and China—highlight the region's importance in global energy and commodity markets. Consequently, resource control has become a defining feature of the security and foreign policy strategies pursued by external actors such as China, Russia, Turkey, France, and the United States (FAO, 2021).

This geostrategic realignment is deeply intertwined with economic objectives. Private companies from these powers have established significant investments in mining, energy, infrastructure, and logistics, often operating in parallel with state-led military initiatives. The intersection of security and economic interests is particularly evident in the Sahel's gold and uranium industries, where foreign presence is often justified through both security cooperation and development rhetoric.

Atif/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

At the same time, countries along the Gulf of Guinea—such as Ghana, Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire, and Benin—are becoming new centers of international attention, driven by offshore oil and gas reserves and the escalation of maritime security threats, including piracy and smuggling. These dynamics are contributing to a multilayered geopolitical contest, reshaping Africa’s strategic landscape and altering the trajectory of regional and global power relations (Yabi, 2024). China maintains a limited military footprint, relying on a base in Djibouti and increasing arms exports to safeguard its economic interests. Beyond economic motives, China’s arms diplomacy functions as a strategic tool to counter Western dominance and secure long-term influence in African security architectures.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In recent years, the Sahel and West Africa have emerged as epicenters of intensified global strategic competition, shaped by shifting alliances, security crises, and the pursuit of geopolitical influence. The evolving security landscape—especially the proliferation of armed groups in northern Mali—has fundamentally altered the regional balance of power.

While France once maintained a dominant role as the region’s principal security actor, its military presence has come under increasing scrutiny. Though originally intended to counter terrorism and bolster regime stability, French interventions have drawn widespread public criticism, contributing indirectly to the rise of military coups and ultimately undermining Paris’s influence. This erosion of trust has created space for alternative actors.

Russia has capitalized on this vacuum, significantly expanding its regional presence—particularly through the Wagner Group and now the Africa Corps—under a strategy combining military support, disinformation campaigns, and diplomatic engagement. Simultaneously, the United States has suffered strategic setbacks, notably the loss of access to military bases in Niger and Chad, prompting a broader reassessment of its posture in Africa.

Amid these shifts, Turkey has emerged as a rising actor by leveraging its defense industry, most notably through the export of Bayraktar UAVs, and by forging multidimensional diplomatic partnerships. Its initiatives reflect a long-term strategy combining hard power and soft power, particularly in the Sahel.

China, while maintaining a limited direct military presence, continues to expand its influence through arms sales, military training programs, and infrastructure investments. These activities align with Beijing’s broader effort to project power indirectly while safeguarding its economic interests across the continent.

Rising foreign military presence is weakening regional stability and undermining state sovereignty, creating a persistent security dilemma for the Sahel. In the medium term, this multi-actor rivalry is likely to entrench insecurity rather than resolve it. Russia’s institutionalization of its role through the “Africa Corps” and Türkiye’s expanding defense partnerships currently provide visible leverage, while China’s economic and arms diplomacy may yield longer-term strategic advantage. France’s influence has eroded, and the United States faces challenges in repositioning its forces effectively. For Sahelian states, the primary risks lie in heightened insecurity, political fragility, and constrained economic autonomy. Overall, the findings suggest that the Sahel is evolving into a multipolar security arena where external actors compete not only militarily but also economically and ideologically. This transformation will reshape African states’ foreign policy choices and exert lasting influence on global power balances.

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

**Information About Ethics Committee Approval:** Ethics committee approval was not required.

**Research And Publication Ethics Statement:** The authors declare that the ethical rules are followed in all preparation processes of this study. In the event of a contrary situation, the ASSAM International Refereed Journal has no responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the author of the study.

**Conflict Of Interest Statement:** There is no conflict of interest among the authors and/or any institution.

**Contribution Rate Statement:** The authors contributed equally to the work.

## REFERENCES

- Abegunrin, O., & Manyeruke, C. (2020). China–Africa relations in an era of great transformations. Springer.
- ADF. (2024). Bien qu'ils aient un nouveau nom, les mêmes mercenaires russes tourmentent l'Afrique. Africa Defense Forum. <https://tls.tc/cvDL7>
- AFP. (2024). La France va réduire ses troupes en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre. VOA Afrique. <https://shorturl.at/ydxGK>
- Africa Defense Forum. (2024). China expands arms sales to Africa. <https://adf-magazine.com>
- Africom. (2024). Joint statement from the US Department of Defense and the Department of National Defense. <https://tls.tc/gzEoJ>
- Agenzia Nova. (2024, 1 Mayıs). والبنتاغون: بدء انسحاب القوات الأمريكية من قاعدة نجامينا adنش [Çad ve Pentagon: ABD kuvvetlerinin N'Djamena askeri üssünden çekilmeye başlaması]. <https://shorturl.at/GLmie>
- Al Jazeera. (2016). Fransa'nın Afrika'daki askerî operasyonları: Épervier'den Barkhane'a uzanan müdahale zinciri. <https://shorturl.at/9Mw2q>
- Al Jazeera. (2023). Afrika'da Fransız nüfuzu: Ticaret ortaklığından sömürge yağmasına. <https://shorturl.at/ovFzn>
- Al Jazeera. (2024'a). "الفيلق الأفريقي.. فاغنر" [Afrika Kolordusu.. Kara kıtada yeni bir Rus "Wagner"]. <https://shorturl.at/bzbn0>
- Al Jazeera. (2024b). Turkey eyes military base in Niger's Agadez after US withdrawal. <https://www.aljazeera.com>
- Al-Dayyus, M. (2024). Afrika'da Fransa'nın yeni sömürgeci stratejileri ve hegemonya erozyonu. <https://shorturl.at/SRrM7>
- Al-Rai. (2022). "Shadow Soldiers" ... Wagner mercenaries extend Russian influence in 12 African countries. <https://tls.tc/t2JaC>
- Alexandre, F. (2024). Niger: Pourquoi la base militaire américaine d'Agadez est stratégique pour les États-Unis. RFI. <https://shorturl.at/Xq9Sq>
- Alexandre, J. (2024). U.S. military repositioning in West Africa. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 80(2), 45–60.
- Anadolu Agency. (2021). Wagner Group's presence in four African countries: Motives, strategy, and tools. <https://shorturl.at/INV4g>
- Anadolu Agency. (2024). Malian army chief visits military units in Turkey. <https://tls.tc/bcuUA>
- Anadolu Ajansı. (2025). Türkiye ile Niger arasında askeri mali işbirliği anlaşması. <https://tls.tc/8K02i>
- Arkhangelskaya, A. (2013). Le retour de Moscou en Afrique subsaharienne? *Afrique contemporaine*, 248(4), 61–74. <https://tls.tc/Y8N1t>

Atif/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

- Babb, C. (2024a). US general: Chad agrees to bring back US forces. Voice of America. <https://tls.tc/050rd>
- Babb, C. (2024b). US withdraws from Niger base, Turkey steps in. Voice of America. <https://www.voanews.com>
- Bassou, A. (2023). Les relations militaires entre la Russie et l’Afrique, avant et après la guerre en Ukraine. Atlantic Council Africa Center. <https://tls.tc/z1DeH>
- Baykar Technologies. (2023). Bayraktar TB2 deliveries to African partners. <https://www.baykartech.com>
- BBC News Arabic. (2023). [Prigojin'in öldürülmesinden sonra Rus Wagner grubunun geleceği ne?] <https://shorturl.at/sqeBS>
- Bruyère-Ostells, W. (2016). Outil militaire et influence française en Afrique de 1960 à nos jours. Relations internationales, (165), 3–22. Presses Universitaires de France. <https://tls.tc/YnN6P>
- Cabestan, J. P. (2023). China’s military presence and strategy in Africa. Routledge.
- Coen, D., & Nadler, D. (2013). France’s military engagement in Africa: Trends and implications. European Foreign Affairs Review, 18(2), 145–162.
- CNSP. (2024, March 15). Official communiqué on U.S. military agreement. Conseil National pour la Sauvegarde de la Patrie. Niamey.
- Dahshan, A. (2024). Russian influence in Africa: Motives, strategy, and tools. Dimensions Center for Future Studies. <https://tls.tc/9nsjT>
- Desorgues, P. (2023). Où se trouvent les principales activités de Wagner en Afrique? TV5MONDE. <https://shorturl.at/GHaG5>
- Diallo, M. (2021). Security challenges in Mali and the Sahel. Bamako: Sahel Research Institute.
- Enuka, C. (2011). China’s military diplomacy and its influence in Africa. African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, 5(2), 97–106.
- Euronews. (2022). Fransa’nın Afrika’daki askerî varlığı: 60 yıllık müdahale tarihi. <https://shorturl.at/OGiwf>
- Food and Agriculture Organization. (2021). Natural resources in Africa: Country profiles. <https://www.fao.org>
- France 24. (2024). «النيجر تلغي اتفاق التعاون العسكري مع الولايات المتحدة وتصفه بـ«المجحف ABD ile askeri iş birliği anlaşmasını iptal etti ve bunu "haksız" olarak nitelendirdi». <https://t.ly/tKhO3>
- GNET. (2023). Wagner Group as a terrorist entity: Legal and strategic implications. Global Network on Extremism and Technology. <https://gnet-research.org>
- Graceffo, A. (2024). China’s arms trade in Africa: Growing reach and strategic aims. Asia Times. <https://asiatimes.com>
- Haski, P. (2024, March 20). France’s Africa policy in transition. France Inter. <https://www.franceinter.fr>
- Le Monde. (2024). Chassés du Niger, les États-Unis redéploient leur dispositif militaire en Côte d’Ivoire. <https://shorturl.at/qw8Yt>
- Le Temps. (2024). Le départ des soldats américains de la base de Niamey au Niger est achevé. <https://shorturl.at/nsJu5>
- Legros, J. (2024). US-Botswana defence forces kick off exercise Southern Accord 2024. United States Africa Command. <https://tls.tc/tbbfm>

Atıf/Citation: Aboubacar İssa, M.M. (2026). Geopolitical Rivalry in The Sahel: Global and Regional Military Engagement. ASSAM International Refereed Journal (28), 79-94.  
<https://doi.org/10.58724/assam.1808678>

- Madar. (2024). Bayraktar: Turkish drone diplomacy in Africa. <https://tls.tc/0eUg1>
- Maïabi, K. (2024). Turkey’s military presence and diplomacy in the Sahel. *African Security Review*, 33(1), 22–35.
- Malijet. (2022a). Mali–Turkey: Minister Sadio Camara visits Ankara. <https://shorturl.at/PdOPC>
- Malijet. (2022b). Turkey and Mali sign military cooperation agreements. <https://www.malijet.com>
- Martins, B. O., Tank, P., & İşleyen, B. (2023). Turkish drones as a foreign policy tool: A technology-mediated search for autonomy (MidEast Policy Brief No. 1). Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). <https://www.prio.org/publications/13435>
- Martins, C. (2023). Drone diplomacy: Turkey’s use of UAVs as foreign policy tools. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 46(4), 567–589.
- Millî Savunma Bakanlığı. (2025). Nijer Savunma Bakanı Orgeneral Salifou Mody'nin Türkiye ziyareti. <https://tls.tc/u3EpM>
- Mirza, F. (2023). The Wagner Group is entering its terrorism era. *Global Network on Extremism and Technology*. <https://tls.tc/7mThU>
- Muhammed Ali. (2022). Türkiye’nin Afrika politikası ve askeri iş birlikleri. *Ortadoğu Analiz*, 14(1), 40–55.
- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2022). Trends in International arms Transfers, 2022. <https://www.sipri.org>
- TRT Global. (2024). Turkey and Niger sign a “Declaration of Intent” for cooperation in oil and natural gas. <https://trt.global/arabi/article/18184969>
- U.S. Africa Command. (2024). U.S. withdrawal from Niger completed. <https://tls.tc/mz6hU>
- Vendrely, J. (2024, June 10). Russia strengthens ties with Chad. *Jeune Afrique*. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com>
- Vincent, E. (2025). L’armée française met fin à sa présence permanente au Sénégal. *Le Monde*. <https://tls.tc/t3VRM>
- Yabi, G. O. (2024). The security-mineral nexus in West Africa: Geopolitical reconfigurations. *Sahel Journal of Strategic Studies*, 12(2), 77–93.
- Yıldız, M. (2022). Çin’in Afrika politikası: Barış gücü ve silah diplomasisi. *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 19(75), 121–138. |