

Burkina Faso's Nuclear Power Deal with Russia. Is Moscow Displacing Paris and Washington?

By [Peter Koenig](#)

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Outside of the Middle East and Ukraine, life continues – in some parts of the world, on a positive note.

The West African country, Burkina Faso, had two military coups within 8 months in 2022. The first in January 2022, bringing interim-President Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba to power. Allegedly, due to his incapacity to deal with Islamist insurgency, a second military coup on 22 September 2022 removed him. The new coup leader, Captain Ibrahim Traoré took over as interim leader.

Does the US have a military base in Burkina Faso? According to several international analysts, the United States's military involvement in Burkina Faso is opaque. However, the Pentagon has a military contingent of about 100 "soldiers" in Burkina. Their role is mainly training Burkinabe's military, says Major Andrew Caulk, public affairs director for Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA).

See [this](#).

One might assume that both coups were "engaged" by the US military for a specific purpose: perhaps to get rid of the French influence, and, especially, the enslaving CFA franc currency which is still closely tied to the Banque de France, the French Central Bank and gradually replacing the CFS franc by the US dollar, i.e., an attempt to dollarize the country.

This would tend to make you think that the US wants to take over the role of the "influencer" in this poor West African country, replacing the French; and perhaps with the same stroke move a step closer to dollarizing West- and Central African economies.

Burkina Faso is rich in mineral resources and produces gold, silver, zinc, copper,

manganese, phosphate, and limestone in substantial quantities. It also has reserves of diamonds, bauxite, nickel, and vanadium. However, these remain largely unexploited.

In addition, Burkina is a land-locked country, right in the center of West Africa, bordering on Mali to the north and west, Niger to the northeast, Benin to the southeast, and Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo to the south. Might these be enough reasons of interest for Washington?

Now comes the hammer.

Burkina Faso has just signed a nuclear power deal with Russia.

Burkina Faso and Russia last Friday, 13 October, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the construction of a nuclear power plant in Burkina Faso.

The agreement is a culmination of talks the Burkinabe military ruler Capt. Ibrahim Traore had with President Putin on July 29, 2023 in Moscow, during the Russia-Africa Summit in Moscow. A similar agreement was signed with Mali on the same occasion.

“Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom has signed a memorandum of understanding with Burkina Faso and another with Mali on cooperation in the field of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The agreements were signed on 13 October in Moscow on the sidelines of the 6th Russian Energy Week Forum.” See [this](#).

Burkina Faso is one of the least electrified countries globally, with only about 20% of the population having access to electricity, according to the International Energy Atomic Agency. National electrification for Mali is slightly higher with about 30% to 35%.

Russia's inroads in West Africa are a welcome sign that Africa too will be benefitting from multipolarity in the coming years.

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Featured image: Ousmane Bougouma and Vyacheslav Volodin at the “Russia-Africa” parliamentary conference in Moscow on 19 March 2023 (Licensed under CC BY 4.0)

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