



Russian Media and West African Politics: Analyzing Political Objectives through Media Portrayals of Military Coups in the Sahel

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CONTEXT

Since the late 2010s, Russia's re-engagement with Africa has attracted increasing attention from scholars and the international community. The central question in the Russia-Africa literature remains: what motivates Moscow's intensified involvement with African states?

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

This project takes a unique approach to examining Russia's objectives in the West African Sahel by analyzing Russia's state-owned media portrayals of coups and post-coup political developments in Burkina Faso and Niger in Russian language, targeting domestic population



METHODOLOGY

350 articles were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis. To incorporate African perspectives, 7 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana



KEY FINDINGS

- Moscow's engagement with the WAS is mainly driven by political and status-related interests
- The region is a key arena in Russia's geopolitical competition with the West
- The Kremlin uses the region to build its domestic image, a motivation largely overlooked in existing research



WHY THIS RESEARCH MATTERS

- No prior research has examined how Russian media portrays the West African Sahel or the African continent more broadly to its domestic population
- Findings are derived directly from the Kremlin communications – what it says, how it says it, and to whom
- More broadly, this research shows that in tightly controlled media contexts, published content can reveal a lot about governments' motivations, interests, and views on other actors

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