

The Pillars of Russian's New Influence in the African Sahel: Motives, Objectives, Tools, And Prospects

مركزات النفوذ الروسي الجديد في الساحل الأفريقي: الدوافع، الأهداف، الآليات والافاق

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Abstract :

This research paper aims to expose, examine, and analyze foundations of new Russian influence and its understanding in the African Sahel region, focusing on the strategic and geostrategic importance of the region, and Leaning on Russia's various regional and international props. In addition to its motives, objectives, and mechanisms that Impact its crystallization of the new influence in the region at the present time, in a manner that contributes to consolidating the dimensions of restoring its position as an influential global power in a multipolar international system in the Future prospects.

This research paper concludes that the foundations of Russia's new influence in the African Sahel seem grounded on; multifaceted regional supports linked to Russian strategic and, geostrategic interests. And international props based within the framework of Russia's review of its accounts with its opponents and, strategic competitors from the major international powers to prevent their unilateral control of the region. In addition to its multiple motives and objectives, which are linked to the content of achieving the requirements of its comprehensive national security, by using and testing Its tools ; possesses—diplomatic, security-military, and economic , that may be contribute to sustaining and expanding its presence in the region and consolidating the dimensions of restoring its position as an effective and Impact global power.

Keywords: Russia, influence, Sahel region, impact.

الملخص :

تستهدف هذه الورقة البحثية عرض، فحص وتحليل مركزات النفوذ الروسي الجديد واستيعابها في منطقة الساحل الإفريقي، بالتركيز على الأهمية الإستراتيجية والجيوستراتيجية للمنطقة، وبالاستناد على مختلف دلائل روسيا الإقليمية والدولية، بالإضافة إلى دوافعها، أهدافها، وآلياتها المؤثرة في بلورة نفوذها الجديد في المنطقة في الوقت الراهن على النحو الذي يساهم في تكريس أبعاد استعادة مكانتها كقوة عالمية مؤثرة في نظام دولي متعدد الأقطاب في الأفاق. وتوصلت هذه الورقة البحثية إلى أن مركزات نفوذ روسيا الجديد في الساحل الإفريقي في الواقع تبدو قائمة على: دلائل إقليمية متعددة الأوجه مرتبطة بالمصالح الإستراتيجية والجيوستراتيجية الروسية، ودعائم دولية؛ تدخل ضمن إطار مراجعة روسيا لحساباتها مع خصومها و منافسيها الاستراتيجيين الدوليين الكبار للحيلولة دون استحوادهم المنفرد على المنطقة، بالإضافة إلى دوافعها وأهدافها المتعددة، والمنوطة بمضامين تحقيق متطلبات أمنها القومي الشامل، باستخدامها واختبارها لأدوات؛ دبلوماسية، أمنية-عسكرية، واقتصادية تحوز عليها، قد تسهم في استدامة وتوسيع وجودها في المنطقة في الأفاق، وتكريس أبعاد استعادة مكانتها كقوة عالمية فاعلة ومؤثرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: روسيا ; النفوذ ;منطقة الساحل; تأثير.

Introduction

Until recent years since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the African Sahel region was not of particular Russian interest, given that Russia's economic presence in the region was somewhat weak, for several reasons, the most important of which are: After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it was preoccupied with reforming the country's internal situation in various fields, while the West had been dominating many of the region's issues for decades. However, after its political and economic recovery over the past two decades, it has sought to regain its influential role in the international arena in general, and to seek areas of regional and international influence in particular, especially in relation to its current notable interests in the African Sahel region, which has regional and global strategic and geostrategic importance.

Despite its ongoing war in Ukraine since early 2022, Russia appears to be continuing its engagement in the region, appearing to have relatively succeeded in establishing influence there by exploiting the overall security fragility it suffers from in most areas. Similar to what the United States did to expand its global influence during the Cold War and its support for military and totalitarian regimes in various parts of the world, including Africa, to implement its political agenda - before changing its approach after the end of the Cold War - Russia is almost following the same previous American approach. It has been noted for about a decade or more that its military and security involvement in various dimensions has taken place in all the regions of the Central African Republic and the Sahel region, and it has sought to provide a model of security, military and economic support other than the model conditional on the values of so-called democracy, human rights and others. Which the West imposes on developing countries and the countries of the region as a basis for political, security, and economic support. Russia believes that its model is as useful to the leaders of some Sahel countries who aspire to consolidate their military coup rule as it is to the extent that it is more useful for achieving and expanding its influence in the region as a gateway to the possibility of penetrating deep into Africa.

Problematic: Given the geostrategic and economic importance of the African Sahel region, and the international and regional push to compete over it, Russia, among the major powers, has given great importance to the region in particular, and sought to take advantage of the weakness of the governing systems, the

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instability and the security vacuum there during the beginning of the current decade, especially after the decline of French influence in Mali and the withdrawal of French forces from it. Russia is exploiting this French vacuum. Accordingly, this research paper poses the question: **What are the foundations of Russia's new influence in the African Sahel region and its prospects?**

In order to help answer the problem at hand, this research paper proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis; The foundations of Russia's new influence in the African Sahel are, in fact, based on regional and international foundations, and comprehensive motives and objectives linked to strategic dimensions to restore its position as an influential global power, and reinforced by the security-military, diplomatic and economic tools it possesses to sustain its influence in the Sahel in the future.

Methodology: This research paper adapts several scientific methods, most notably: **The historical research method** to understand and track the development of either the path of Russian preoccupation with the region, or the development of the region's strategic importance in itself across historical contexts; **The comparative method** to compare Russia's calculations with its strategic opponents in terms of international interest in the region, In terms of the implicit comparison of their motives, goals, and tools that each aid in analysis; **The content analysis Technique** to clarify, understand, and comprehend the political connotations of some of the contents of official Russian statements regarding regional issues, as well as the contents of the writings related to the subject of the research paper; **The scenarios technique** to anticipate the prospects and challenges of Russian influence in the region.

Objectives of the research paper: This paper generally, aims to expose, study, analyze, and understand all the Russian foundations impacting in reviving its influence in the African Sahel region, including regional and international foundations, motives, and objectives related to its strategic interests, the desired geostrategic in reality, and related to achieving the contents of its dimensions to restore its position as an influential global power in a multipolar international system in the future.

The importance of the research paper's topic: The importance of this research paper stems from the strategic and geostrategic importance of the Sahel region itself, either, in terms of its geopolitical location as the gateway to the African interior for Russia, Or, in terms of its richness in natural resources, and

various economic opportunities. And seeking to understand the recent growing Russian interest in, aiming to acquire new areas of influence, especially since Russia is not the only international player in the region or in the African continent, which are witnessing international competition, between the rest of the major international powers. And, Therefore, by reviving its current influence in the Sahel, Russia seeks to increase and enrich its overall strength as a major power, particularly in the economic sphere, alongside other symbols of its power, such as, military might, within the framework of consolidating the dimensions of restoring its position as an effective and Impact Power in the desired multipolar system on the horizon.

2 . The African Sahel region In The Russia's historical context and strategic perception

Russia's return to the region was not merely a matter of begging for historical facts, but rather a response to the requirements of one of Russia's comprehensive security and strategic concerns outside its borders. Following the emergence of a long series of accumulated crises that contributed to further complicating the regional situation, Russia exploited this crisis to expand its influence in the region, as will be revealed in this section.

2 . 1 The Importance of the Sahel: Historical Data and Russian Strategic Considerations

Before addressing the strategic and geostrategic importance of the African Sahel region, and its role in attracting Russia in recent years, It is worth noting the importance of attempts to define the geopolitical landscape of the region, by extrapolating the security concerns of the competing powers within it.

2.1.1 The geopolitical definition of the Sahel region and its strategic importance

Before addressing the strategic and geostrategic importance of the African Sahel region, and its role in attracting Russia in recent years, alongside traditional Western powers, China, and some regional actors, albeit to varying degrees, it is worth noting the importance of attempts to define the region's geopolitical landscape by examining the security concerns of the competing powers within it.

2.1.1.1 The Sahel region from a geopolitical perspective:

It may be difficult to define the borders of the Sahel region from a geopolitical perspective, similar to the difficulty of defining this for many regions of geostrategic importance in the world, such as the Middle East, compared to the ease of defining them from a geographical perspective. This difficulty is attributed to the connection of these areas to the comprehensive security concerns of the major powers (Salem, 2013.P114). In other words, it is difficult to define the Sahel region as a concept rather than a geographical area within the framework of international relations, as the region has become a strategic area where international and regional interests compete and conflict .

However, defining it as a geographical area,- As shown in the map in Figure of the Sahel region in the end Of this Research Paper- , witch seems less strict despite the wide differences. For example, the Mediterranean may be viewed as the area from which the Persian Gulf beginsa (Ruel,1991, P12). However, its definition as a geographical region—as illustrated by the map in the form of the Sahel region at the end of this research paper—appears less rigid, despite significant variations. For example, the Mediterranean Sea can be considered the region from which the Arabian Gulf begins (Salem,2013, P114). Therefore, given the multiplicity and multiplicity of security concerns of the major powers, the Sahel region may expand geopolitically in the foreseeable future in light of the increasing security and strategic exposure to it, and may exceed its geographical borders in accordance with this exposure in light of the international conflict and competition over it. Similar to the expansion of the Middle East region into the Greater or Extended Middle East region extending east to Afghanistan and west to Mauritania(Arie Marcelo, 1996.P25).

So, On this basis, the concept of the region remains a highly complex geopolitical one, subject to the security interests of the major powers in the Sahel (Salem,2013, P114). The name of the region may be changed, so that it bears a new name - for example - “the Great Coast” or “the Extended” or any other name that includes expansion, and with it its current area and geographical borders expand to include other African countries that were not previously included within it, according with the expansion, increase, complexity, overlap and intertwining of the comprehensive security interests of these external international powers.

2.1.1.2 The strategic and geostrategic importance of the Sahel:

The strategic and geostrategic importance of the Sahel region is evident, in addition to its distinguished geographical location, which acting as a bridge between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, and which makes It a Key area for international Security and Trade In hand ,and Depending on the region's diverse resources, such as arable land, water, and vegetation, it also includes marine and coastal wildlife , These all resources and their quantity vary according to the geographical location of each region or country in the region in other hand (Dmitry,2025).

In this context, The Sahel region, located between the Sahara Desert and the more fertile regions to the south, is not a maritime coastal region - as its name suggests - but rather a land-based geographical strip, rich in various minerals found in varying degrees in its countries, such as gold in Mali and Burkina Faso. Niger has uranium, in addition to other minerals such as bauxite, zinc, copper, iron ore, manganese, phosphates, and salt, as well as gold and uranium. This makes the region attractive for exploration, investment, and regional and international competition (Mensori Nawel, Hakkani Halima, 2025, p393)

So, All this comprehensive strategic and geostrategic importance, the region, rich in diverse natural resources and minerals, as well as oil and gas, has become a source of great interest and competition from external powers such as China, Russia, and Western countries such as France and the United States (Magdy,2025). These powers derive their strength from the economic potential of these resources, resulting in a complex geopolitical dynamic as they compete for access and influence in this strategically important region.

Therefore, The region's richness in various natural resources and minerals and its international attraction are the foundations for the existence of a linkage between the various resources available in the region and the foreign interests of the major powers mentioned. Some of the forms of this linkage include the kind of Resource wealth and external interest, Similar to its connection to Russian interests in the countries of the region.

2.2 The historical data on the development of Russian interest in the Sahel region.

Russian foreign policy in the Sahel region has a long history marked by profound and complex developments, from the nineteenth century AD through the modern era of the Russian Empire, when relations with Africa were limited. What prompted Imperial Russia at that time to consider its interests in the African continent, where, European colonial tendencies and the marginalization of Imperial Russia. In this regard, during the twentieth century after the formation of the former Soviet Union, and particularly during World War II, it played a prominent role in Africa, Through this, Moscow sought to gain influence in the African continent, by supporting national liberation movements and leftist parties in a large number of countries on the continent, and by providing military and economic aid, and to achieve the goal of confronting Western influence (Boumlik,2023, P166), especially from the United States and Western colonial powers, within the framework of the struggle over spheres of influence in Africa during the Cold War era.

However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian policy towards Africa witnessed a decline on the continent, due to the deterioration of the political, economic and security situation in Russia as a result of the Soviet collapse, at a time when the continent was exposed to a comprehensive security vulnerability, especially in the African Sahel region(Zidane,214,P212),Where this exposure contributed to the increase in its strategic importance, with the passage of time following the end of the Cold War, and the emergence of new threats, which constituted a major entry point for justifications for regional presence and international competition on the continent in general and the Sahel in particular, and international and regional competition became intense, especially during the past decade and the beginning of the current decade (Magdy,2025), Which made Russia at the beginning of the current century, after regaining its political and economic health and modernizing its military capabilities, to rethink and turn to Africa, including the Sahel region, by exploiting the legacy of its historical relations with the countries of Africa, including the Sahel countries in side(Magdy,2025), by exploiting the implications of its foreign policy orientations aimed at gaining spheres of influence globally and in Africa, in addition to other strategic considerations and

competing with international adversaries over spheres of influence in the world in other side(Ruel,1991, P12).

Accordingly, as much as the current Russian trends in Africa in general, and the Sahel region, are governed by considerations of Russia's historical reality and its relations with the countries of the region, they are also controlled by its strategic considerations.

2.3 Strategic considerations of Russia's engagement in the Sahel region.

With the current Russian President " Vladimir Putin", Who took power in Russia in 2000, modern Russia mobilized its energy to advance Russia as a major power influencing the global system in hand, to achieve Russia's interests on the global and regional levels, his was evident when President Putin announced the most important principles of Russia's new foreign policy, including what is known as the "Putin Doctrine," which includes, among other things, a call for a multipolar world not subject to any single superpower(Zidane,2014,p212), In which, Russia would play a fundamental role. Putin, a creation of the former Soviet intelligence agency, the KGB, sought to restore Russia's standing on the international stage and preserve its national security, and to draw up a new foreign policy map for his country, including dealing with Africa as a vital region in the world for Russia, requiring its political, economic and military presence on the continent, Including the Sahel region, which has regional and international geostrategic importance (Zidane,2014,p212).

The importance of the African Sahel region for Russia stems from other intertwined strategic considerations. On the one hand, the region represents a soft underbelly for Western influence, especially French influence, which has remained entrenched there for decades and has controlled the “three baskets” of the Sahel countries: security, politics, and economy. Russia has been exploiting its position in these countries through less costly and more symbolic means to dwarf and undermine Western influence, particularly French influence.

As for the second aspect, and within the framework of Russia's efforts to establish a naval presence on the global level, the Sahel region represents a potential gateway in Russia's strategic calculations to access the Atlantic Ocean and its strategic extension, after its naval positioning in the warm waters of the

eastern Mediterranean on the Syrian coast since the second decade of the current century (Mohamdi,2024,P 388).

On the third side, in light of the efforts of the transitional regimes of the Sahel countries to search for international alternatives to obtain unconditional support, and following the widening crisis of confidence between them and the conditional Western support, accompanied by an awakening among the peoples of the countries of the region (hassanine ,2020, P07), which their transitional regimes exploited and promoted to embody the legitimacy of their rule in power, the Sahel has become a fertile area for Russia to expand its network of relations with those regimes. This is consistent with the Russian approach, which focuses on non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, or at least not in the manner of the usual Western imperialist colonial intervention in a new way (Magdy,2025).

In conclusion to this requirement, there is difficulty in defining the concept of the Sahel region from a geopolitical perspective, compared to its ease of definition from a geographical perspective. It has also, become clear that, the region enjoys great strategic, geostrategic importance and, is a subject of great international competition, and has been a focus of special Russian interest, since the beginning of the current decade, based - among other basis - on regional pillars related to the exposure of the region itself, Regional pillars related to Russia's competition, with its major power counterparts.

3. Regional and international factors impacting the crystallization of Russia's new influence in the Sahel

There are many regional and international factors, that have shaped the foundations impact in the Russian's influence crystallization in the Sahel region, and have contributed significantly to Russia's renewed momentum, and return to the region, which will be discussed in this section.

3.1 Regional pillars impacting the crystallization of new Russian influence in the Sahel

There are a number of regional factors influencing the crystallization of Russia's new influence in the Sahel, that will be addressed in this section.

3.1.1 The Dilemma of building The national State; The countries of the Sahel region have long suffered from political instability, and the fragility of the

governing systems in most of its countries, which has contributed to the decline of most Sahel countries in performing their security functions in the comprehensive sense at almost all levels. This has resulted in growing popular discontent with existing governments and regimes (Askar,2023). Mali, a model of the Sahel countries, is struggling with the dilemma of state-building, given the multiple challenges it faces in various fields, including: The weakness of state institutions, The absence of the rule of law, Democratic challenges, Extremism and terrorism, and Ethnic conflicts, Drug and arms trafficking.

And as for development challenges, there are many manifestations, including: Poverty and unemployment, Lack of infrastructure and climate change (hassanine, 2020, P06). In contrast, there are economic challenges that are evident in: The impact of climate change and drought on agriculture, especially since Mali's economy relies heavily. External debt, Poor management of local natural resources. Finally, regarding societal challenges, many manifestations are evident, such as Social inequality, Weak education system, and Deteriorating health services and the system(Human Aid,2024).

Accordingly, and as a result of the existence of these challenges and the regional circumstances referred to, which are not limited to Mali only, but include most of the Sahel countries, Russia found reasons for its intervention in the region by nominating Its security, economic, and political model is presented to the countries of the region, in order to crystallize its influence in a way that serves its interests in the region and balances Western influence there, in exchange for its countries welcoming a Russian role as an alternative to the Western role.

3.1.2 *The phenomenon of successive military coups:* This was evident in Russia's support for successive coups in Mali, Burkina Faso (two coups), Chad, Guinea, and Niger (one coup), not to mention some failed coup attempts during the last three years of the current decade (askar,2023). And When the Sahel region became a vital area exploited by Russia to expand and assert its African influence to balance European (French) and American influence, especially after a series of coups in the Sahel region between 2020 and 2023, Russia exploited the rise to power of coup leaders loyal to it, taking advantage of demonstrations in support of the new military leaders, in addition to the decline in the value of democracy among Africans. Russia has also exploited the deteriorating security situation to establish a presence in the Sahel as a haven for new regimes in combating terrorism and curbing waves of rebellion in the region (Christopher, Raphael 2025)

3.1.3 *The region as a new center of terrorism and waves of rebellion in the outskirts:*

The growing security threats in the Sahel countries, such as a series of coups, the rise of terrorist organizations, the network of challenges, the spread of poverty, drought, organized crime, drug trafficking, ethnic conflicts, and the growing waves of rebellion in the outskirts, among others, are regional conditions that have enabled Russia to exploit and penetrate the region(Askar,2023). And to return in, strangely to consolidating its influence there in light of the ECOWAS bloc's inability to contain the region's crises and the decline of French security influence.

3.1.4 *The failure of the ECOWAS group to contain the crises in;* Russia's recent support and strengthening of its ties with coup regimes in the Sahel countries, coupled with the new transitional governments' rejection of Western and French presence in the region, has posed a significant challenge to the Western-backed ECOWAS grouping, and its failure to resolve the region's crises. This has also provided an opportunity for Russia to penetrate the Sahel countries and emerge as a reliable alternative ally to the West (askar,2023)

This may herald an intensification of Russian-Western geopolitical competition in the foreseeable future, posing a double threat to the security and

stability of the region, which is naturally at stake. Accordingly(Christopher, Raphael 2025), Russia has exploited all these situations and considerations to consolidate its serious influence in the region, alongside its calculations regarding its strategic opponents.

So, According to the above, The bottom line of this requirement is that these aforementioned manifestations, while representing a comprehensive security fragility, that the countries of the region are suffering from, constitute regional pillars that influence the crystallization of Russian influence in the Sahel, In addition to the existence of international pillars, that flow in the same direction, which will be addressed in the following section.

3.2 International factors impact the revival of Russian influence in the Sahel: The international pillars related to Russia's calculations with its strategic opponents and international competitors as an international factor in reviving its influence and expansion in the region. witch appears in the following:

3.2.1 *The decline of French influence in the Sahel:* As much as the Russian movement in the region comes to exploit the French vacuum in the Sahel, it is also an advanced erosion of French interests there, and is linked to the expansion of Russian interests and influence in the African Sahel region, which is considered the gateway to the African interior for Moscow, Especially since French-Russian relations, in their development since the end of the Cold War, have not always been in the best condition (Khattab,2025). Despite the positive developments in relations between the two countries regarding their shared vision of a multipolar international system with multiple powers of strength and sovereignty, Sharing areas of influence through understandings to resist any tendency to monopolize the international stage in a unipolar system, there are differences between the two countries (Al-Khoury, 2024, P5-27). While France seeks to promote its vision of a multipolar international system, like Russia. However, this ambitious shared endeavor is marred by use model in the face of Western models (askar,2023).

Accordingly, Russia, beyond Europe, has sought to undermine the French presence in the Sahel region, despite its current preocca clear difference, which quickly became apparent following the Russian-Ukrainian war. The multipolar system, according to the Russian view, remained primarily based on Russia being an independent pole (Asker, 2021), regarding Russia's adoption of a

foreign policy based on the principle of rejecting the Western model and its determination to assert a Russian unipolarization with the war with Ukraine (Boumlik,2023, P164), by strengthening its network of relations with the Sahel countries, which have rejected the French presence that had dominated the region for decades, dating back to the colonial era.

3.2.2 *Competing with US influence in the Sahel:* Despite the ongoing and escalating conflict in Ukraine since February 2022, Russia's strategic ambitions in Africa have not diminished. Rather, it has increased its focus on the Sahel region, which serves as a gateway to strengthening its influence in the African continent and as a pivotal point for countering US influence, particularly on the continent (Boumlik,2023, P164). Based on one of the major axes of Russian foreign policy, which emphasizes Russian participation as an influential player in international politics alongside the United States, and rejects the American unipolarity of the current international system (Al-Khoury, 2024, P5-27), Russia aspires to a multipolar international system in which it can guarantee its global influence and impact after its decline since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Accordingly, Russia's return to the Sahel region to compete with and keep pace with American influence, and after being one of the most important international pillars influencing the crystallization of Russia's new influence in the region, can be considered part of Russia's calculations with its international Western strategic opponents, led by the United States, and the rejection of its global hegemony over areas of influence in light of the unipolarity that Moscow rejects. And so do its other international competitors, most notably China, which is no less important in terms of its growing soft influence in Africa in general and the Sahel in particular.

3.2.3 *Competition with China:* With China's growing activity in Africa in general and the Sahel region in particular, Russia fears a decline in its new influence in the region (Boumlik,2023, P166). It also fears a decline in its military role, which is linked to geopolitical and economic objectives, especially after the growth of China's influence in the Central Asian region, which represents the last remaining Russian influence there (Khattab,2025). While Russia still faces economic challenges and international sanctions that could hamper its newfound influence in the Sahel, the power imbalance between Moscow and Beijing could lead to an imbalance in the Russian-Chinese

relationship, similar to the relationship between China and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Dmitry,2025).

Therefore, the new Russian involvement in the African Sahel represents a competition for influence there and a challenge and test of Russian power and capabilities in the face of Chinese influence, power and capabilities, along with Western and regional powers and capabilities, on the one hand. On the other hand, Russia maintains a delicate balance between cooperation and competition in its relations with China, governed by pragmatic interests and geopolitical realities.

In conclusion, looking at the strategic and geostrategic importance of the Sahel region internationally in general, and Russia in particular, it can be said that the region has become one of Russia's most important security concerns in the comprehensive sense, and as much as it is governed by Russian historical data, it is also based on Moscow's strategic considerations. As much as Russia relies on regional pillars to develop its influence in the region, it also relies on international pillars within the international competition over it, in addition to other strategic pillars related to Russia itself. And linked to its internal and external strategic motives, and its mechanisms and prospects related to achieving its national dimensions, which ultimately boil down to maximizing Russia's global gains, so that it becomes an Impacting global power within the multipolar international system it seeks.

4. The pillars of new Russian influence in the Sahel

There are many strategic motives related to Russia itself, whether those related to Russia's internal or external aspects, or their connection to the goals and mechanisms for achieving various Russian interests in the Sahel . This section will examine Russia's pillars contributing to the crystallization of its Sahelian influence

4.1 Russian motives, goals, and strategic dimensions in the Sahel region; Russia has both internal and external motivations. Given that the components of global power are focused on enhancing Russia's national security and its ability to influence the global balance of power, this section will address the motivations related to Russia's internal and external strategic objectives, as well as the dimensions affecting its Sahelian influence .

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4.1.1 Motives related to Russia's domestic objectives. Russia is driven to pursue influence in the Sahel region in particular, by important domestic motives related to goals serving Russia's domestic interests as follows;

4.1.1.1 *Ensuring national security*: In this same context, Russia's national security requirements at the present time are no longer solely linked to Russia's regional proximity or the latter's fear of NATO's proximity to its borders. Rather, Russia seeks to protect its spheres of influence and interests centered in countries and regimes that it considers allies (Dmitry,2025), but Rather, Russia seeks to protect its spheres of influence and interests centered in countries and regimes it considers allies, or with which it maintains strategic and economic relations that constitute an external extension of its national security in the world, similar to its influence in Syria and its widespread influence in the Sahel region(Askar,2023).

National security in Russia is: therefore a concept that encompasses a wide range of internal and external issues related to protecting the country's sovereignty, internal stability, and developing its economic and military capabilities (Christopher, Raphael 2025). These issues are primarily regulated by the Russian Security Council, an advisory body to the President of the Republic, which works to restore Russia's status as a great power.

4.1.1.2 *Restoring its status as a great power*: This trend is confirmed by the belief of current Russia, led by President Putin, that Russia has a sacred historical mission based on its ambition to restore the legacy of its historical "greatness," reclaim its "rights" that were usurped from it by the West, led by the United States, and reverse the geopolitical defeat that Russia suffered after the disintegration and collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991(Zidane,2014,p214). The need to avoid the mistakes made by the Soviet Union, particularly through international cooperation in Africa in general and the Sahel region in particular, and to extend influence there at all levels without burdening the Russian state treasury, is essential. It is useful here not to neglect the character of individual rule when studying and analyzing current Russian policies, Putin's anti-Western personality traits and his current leadership are influenced by the legacy of the former Soviet KGB, which seeks to "restore" Russia's past glory (Zidane,2014,p212). This is reflected in Russia's new influence in the Sahel under Putin, which aims to reach deeper into Africa.

4.1.1.3 ***Economic interests:*** Moscow is currently pursuing several policies in this regard aimed at consolidating its military presence on the Mediterranean coast and the east, and conducting joint military maneuvers with countries in North Africa, such as Algeria, and in its military presence on the African continent via the African Sahel(Dmitry,2025). It seeks to dominate the energy sector, including oil and gas, and the mining and metals sectors, and to open up African markets to its products. While Russia relies on oil and natural gas exports and various arms sales as its primary source of hard currency, it is keen to protect its markets and secure its energy supply routes(Boumlik,2023, P171).

So, It is strengthening its relations by building strategic partnerships with transitional regimes in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, and is penetrating other countries, pumping its investments into them(Askar,2021), in addition to the fields of defense and security, investments in energy resources, various minerals, and infrastructure in these countries, and competing with international and regional competitors in them. This provides economic and financial resources to the Russian treasury, supports development projects for the country's domestic needs, and bolsters the ruling political system.

4.1.1.4 ***Supporting the political system:*** It is noted that, some Russian leaders may use their country's strong foreign policies to create a sense of national unity, and, mobilize popular support, especially in light of the internal challenges that Russia has faced since the collapse of the Soviet Union(Ruel,1991, P12). Russia seeks to support its ruling political system by instilling a sense of belonging among the ruling system's members, academic circles, and the Russian public to strengthen support for Russia's foreign efforts to achieve its position as an influential global power, and to seek to change the current international order and expand its influence in regions such as Africa. Supporting loyalist regimes in the Sahel region, the gateway to Africa's interior,(Dmitry,2025) in addition to taking internal measures to ensure the country's stability and strengthen the state's role domestically and externally.

So, Russia's pursuit of external influence in general, and influence in the Sahel region in particular, remains driven by important internal motives related to the goal of serving Russia's domestic interests and ensuring national security in the country's comprehensive sense. This motive remains in need of support from motives related to achieving Russia's foreign policy objectives abroad.

4.1.2 External strategic motives related to Russia's foreign objectives:

Russia is also driven in this context, to seek external influence in general and influence in the Sahel region in particular, guarantee of the country's national security and, affirm its geopolitical interests, and confront economic challenges. Accordingly, Russia is seeking to:

4.1.2.1 **Confronting NATO expansion:** Russia views NATO expansion as a threat to its national security, and seeks to prevent more countries from joining the alliance, especially those it considers to be within its historical sphere of influence during the Soviet era and even its current influence (Alexander, 2004, P27). Russia also sees NATO expansion as a threat to its national security not only because of the new countries joining it in Eastern Europe, which currently borders NATO's eastern borders, but also because the alliance's expansion to its south, with different security frameworks, is a threat to its national security(Ken , 2025).

Given the growing influence of Russia south of NATO, from the Middle East and the eastern and southern Mediterranean, extending to the Sahel region, which prompted Russia to engage militarily through the Wagner Group and the Africa Corps to protect its influence in the region(Dmitry,2025), And concluding security partnership agreements with a number of countries in the region, and it is not unlikely that Russia will establish military bases there in the foreseeable future to confront the expansion of NATO(Ken , 2025), which threatens its new influence in any military and security form, and to influence NATO's southern neighbors.

4.1.2.2 **Impacting on neighboring countries:** In this context, as much as Russia aims to maintain its current influence and neighborhood and prevent it from rapprochement with the West or joining military alliances hostile to Moscow, such as NATO(Zidane,2014,p214). It also aims to preserve its historical influence during the former Soviet Union (Christopher, Raphael 2025). Which is expanding to many regions of the world, including Africa. Since the fall of the former Soviet Union, Russia has sought to maintain its influence in the region surrounding its borders, using all available means, including military force, to ensure its influence and prevent the rise of regimes and republics loyal to the West and the United States.

In this context, to curb Western and American influence in Russia's regional environment, Russia has previously intervened in Chechnya after the collapse of

the Soviet Union, in Georgia in 2008, and its military intervention in 2014 and its annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, in addition to its current war with Ukraine since 2022(Ken , 2025), which is supported by the West, and today, in contrast, it seeks, within the framework of its keenness to extend its new influence in Africa and the Sahel region in particular, considering that it is currently a southern neighbor of NATO and a traditional influence of the West, in order to influence and obstruct Western efforts to dominate the Sahel countries, as it is one of the countries of the southern Euro-Atlantic neighborhood, from lining up behind the West, and attracting the regimes of these countries to its side, Whether within the framework of international competition over the entire region, or within the framework of achieving Moscow's geopolitical interests(Alexander, 2004, P27).

4.1.2.3 *Geopolitical interests:* Russia seeks to strengthen its role as a major player in global politics and assert its interests in various regions of the world, including the Sahel region, the gateway to Russia's African depth(Boumlik,2023, P171). Russia seeks to achieve a set of strategic goals, including: Strengthening geopolitical influence to counter Western hegemony. This was evident in Russia's role as an influential international player, supporting transitional military regimes in the Sahel countries to expel traditional Western powers, such as the French military presence in Mali and Niger (Dmitry 2025,).and With Its efforts to build strategic and security partnerships and military cooperation, in addition to Russia's attempts to overcome the economic challenges it faces.

4.1.2.4 *Economic challenges and opportunities:* As much as, Moscow may resort to external influence to secure access to vital resources and markets, and to circumvent sanctions or economic restrictions imposed on it(Boumlik,2023, P171). It also, seeks to confront Western hegemony, and obtain natural resources, such as uranium ,gold, Military and security cooperation to provide support to African governments facing security threats, not to mention challenging Western sanctions imposed on them due to the Russian war in Ukraine(Ken , 2025), by finding new partners and trade corridors outside Western control. Especially, since the importance of the Sahel is evident from its geographical location, which connects the north and south of the continent (Dmitry,2025), its rich natural resources, and the security challenges associated with terrorism and armed groups. Therefore, Russia seeks to achieve a set of

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strategic goals, including increasing its investments in the mining, energy, agriculture, and other sectors (Shadi, 2025,p 04). Moscow also, aims to strengthen its influence through cooperation in the fields of technology, and infrastructure, seeking to invest in projects that meet the needs of Sahel countries and ensure Russia has a strong and sustainable foothold(Asker,2021).

So, all these external motives, linked to Russia's foreign objectives, are among the most important pillars of Russian foreign policy to strengthen its new external influence in the Sahel, and are linked to the dimensions of achieving Russia's national security requirements beyond its national borders.

4.1.2 Russian dimensions related to Russian strategic motives and objectives

The Russian dimensions in the African Sahel region have taken a course towards increasing influence based on influence in the fields of military, economic, and geopolitical security Russia's dimensions are evident in the following:

4.1.2.1 *Security and military dimensions*: This includes providing military assistance to increase the combat capabilities of the Sahel countries, and develop their armies to confront security challenge, in addition to working to establish a new security structure in the region in cooperation, with the Sahel countries alliance(Nicholas,Seun,2025,P116). Russia also plays a role in supporting military coups in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which weakens relations with Western powers, and exploits the security and military vacuum resulting from the decline of the Western military and security role(Nicholas,Seun, 2025,P117), which provides Russia with investments in security, and increased presence of Russian forces and security companies, like Wagner in these countries provides assistance in combating terrorism, in hand, and provides Russia with significant financial gains through Russian arms sales to countries in the region(Majdi,2025),other hand, this revitalizes the Russian treasury, at a time when, it is experiencing a deficit due to the costs of the war with Ukraine and the economic sanctions imposed on Moscow by the West over this war.

Although some analyses indicate that direct Russian security and military engagement in the Sahel has not improved security as desired, However, as much as it may complicate the security situation in the region, it also

pragmatically allows Russia to remain more stable and maintain its influence there, under the pretext of ensuring security to achieve Russia's interests, particularly in the economic sphere, dimensions no less important than Russia's military and security dimensions in the region.

4.1.2.2 *Economic dimensions*: Russia seeks to build economic relations based on direct investments and trade exchange, avoiding the complex political and economic conditions imposed by Western financial institutions, and focusing on interest-based cooperation with the Sahel countries. With the aim of gaining new markets for its goods, services, and trade, especially grains,, agricultural crops, and weapons, in the Sahel or in all African continent, as a whole, taking advantage of Western sanctions against it (Nicholas,Seun,2025,P116). In addition to revitalizing the Russian treasury through its revenues from reviving the investment sector in the fields of industry, agriculture, medicine, renewable energy and others in the midst of expanding its influence in the Region (Shadi, 2025,p 09)..

Russia is also considered a major economic power due to its vast land area, various resources and huge population, which reached about 143.5 million people in 2024, ranking ninth in the world in terms of population (Shadi, 2025,p 08). As much as it requires sustainable development and a stronger economy to meet the needs of the multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian domestic front and ensure its cohesion, in hand, and to serve the dimensions of the project to restore Russia's status as a superpower striving for a multipolar system that guarantees Russia's ability to exert global influence and power, in other hand, and what is related to this also in the media and diplomatic dimensions .

4.1.2.3 *Media and diplomatic dimensions*: Russia attaches great importance to the media and diplomacy aspects , as they play an integrated role in serving its influence on the external level, by shaping public opinion in Russia, passing its foreign policies, and strengthening its influence in international relations. Especially with the development of media and the spread of digital diplomacy (Shadi, 2025,p 04), Russia believes that achieving its influence in the Sahel does not depend solely on military, economic, and technological capabilities (Nicholas,Seun,2025,P116), as much as it depends on media and diplomacy, Sahelian audiences in particular in building the image of the Russian state; with Mobilizing domestic and foreign support, Russia also places great importance

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on employing media diplomacy to enhance its influence in the Sahel, (Shadi, 2025,p 05), , In Addition to that, Russia using its media outlets, such as Sputnik and Russia Today, to spread its culture and narrative and to strengthen popular resentment in Africa as a whole against the Western presence, especially in the region.

4.1.2.4 *Political and strategic dimensions:* If Russia is suffering in its “near abroad” from the West’s attempts to undermine historical ties and symbols associated with, the Soviet era in the Baltic states, and the countries adjacent to its regional borders, similar to western States attempts to remove Ukraine from the Russian orbit, along with Georgia and the former Crimean Peninsula, which Russia considers a form of Western hostility towards it In side, it continues In side, to consider the same hostility existing in its “far abroad,” (Hershberg ,2022P124). where its new influence in the Sahel and all of Africa began to appear, as did the West’s efforts to distance Russia from it. Therefore, Russia's strategy in the Sahel aims to weakening the Western presence and establishing new strategic partnerships with African countries, as if Russia is reviving the era of the Cold War .This time, however, it is based on purely pragmatic, self-interested principles, capitalizing on some of the Soviet Union's mistakes that cost it the bitter reality of collapse (Hershberg ,2022,P124). Russia has geographic and border dimensions that contribute to its political and strategic dimensions.

4.1.2.5 *Geographical and geostrategic dimensions:* Russia realizes that by expanding its influence beyond its regional periphery towards regions of geostrategic importance, such as the African Sahel and all of Africa, it has a geographical and geostrategic dimension required to build Russia’s great power. This power is essentially a combination of hard and soft power, including the ability to exert global influence and provide ideology (Majdi, 2025). In addition to the enormous economic potential, the formation of global strategies depends on the availability of basic factors such as, natural resources, infrastructure, population, technology, and the political desire to achieve comprehensive power (Hershberg ,2022,P124).

Therefore, Russia's geographic and geostrategic dimensions of its growing influence in Africa, particularly the Sahel, are primarily aimed at maximizing its power in the comprehensive sense, so that it can become a superpower similar to

the United States of America, and achieve the goal of a multipolar international system it seeks

4.1.2.6 Historical dimensions: While acknowledging the historical importance of the coast for Russia and the former Soviet Union, the development of the region's comprehensive security exposure over time, from the collapse of the Soviet Union until the present time, has increased its strategic and geostrategic importance for international powers, including Russia (Asker,2025). Therefore, Russia's quest to revive its influence in the Sahel is governed as much by historical considerations of its influence there as by local, regional and international variables in the region as a whole (Alexander, 2004, P27), in addition to the increasing exposure of its strategic importance, especially from an economic perspective, Considering that the measures of power are no longer limited to the military factor, despite its importance, but also to economic power, in addition to other important military, security, and political factors as requirements for comprehensive power (Shadi, 2025,p 04).

Thus, in conclusion of this section, Russia's moves to extend its influence in the African Sahel, as much as they are driven by internal and external motives linked to Russia's domestic and foreign objectives, are also related to the content of Moscow's security dimensions in the comprehensive concept previously mentioned.

As a result of this requirement, it can be considered that the set of internal and external strategic motives, as much as they relate to Russia's objectives in the African Sahel, are also linked in their content to strengthening Russia's regional influence and striving to emerge as an ambitious global power, contain the symbols of the power required for this, as is evident in its use of multiple tools in the Sahel to consolidate its influence in the region.

4.1.2 Tools for consolidating Russia's new influence in the Sahel and its prospects

Russia is using diplomatic, military, and economic tools, in addition to other tools, as mechanisms to extend its influence in the Sahel region . Accordingly, Russia's tools in the Sahel can be addressed in the following:

4.1.2.1 Diplomatic Instrument: Russia is relying on its diplomatic instrument, based on summit diplomacy on the one hand, and the recently established

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African Partnership Management Diplomacy on the other. and more targeted to the scope of emerging and developing Russian interests in the Sahel and Africa.

4.1.2.1.1 *Russian-African Summits Diplomacy*; Russia has adopted summit diplomacy as a tool to strengthen its relations with the countries of the continent as a whole. This was evident in the active Russian diplomacy during the end of the last decade and the beginning of the current one, The first Russian-African summit was held from October 23 to 24, 2019, in the Russian city of Sochi. Russian President Vladimir Putin co-hosted the summit, along with 43 African heads of state or government, Where as, this summit was the main and largest event in Russian-African relations (Shadi, 2025,p 04).

In addition to this summit, the second Russia-Africa summit was held at the Expo Forum in Saint Petersburg on July 27-28, 2023, And Although only 17 heads of state participated in this summit, compared to 43 heads of state who attended the first summit in 2019, this does not mean a decline in Russian diplomatic activity towards Africa (Khattab,2025).Rather, it is primarily due to Russia setting its priorities on the continent during this summit, including the priority of the African Sahel region due to the geopolitical transformations that the region has witnessed.

4.1.2.1.2 *Partnership management diplomacy with Africa*; In this context, Russia was prompted to restructure its diplomatic mechanism for managing its relations with the countries of the African continent collectively, when Russia launched an initiative known as "Management of Partnership with Africa," sponsored by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as a new mechanism aimed at dealing with African regional organizations as a unified entity, instead of dealing with African countries individually, as in the past .And Therefore, the latter has been adopted with Africa within the structure of the Russian Foreign Ministry since February 2025, according to a statement by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (Shadi, 2025,p 04), who said that:" *The establishment of the "Partnership with Africa Department" aims to strengthen the strategic partnership between Russia and the Sahel Alliance to confront security challenges*"(Alexander, 2004, P27). This demonstrates the strategic importance of the Sahel region to Russia.

So, that, Russia has begun opening a permanent mission in the Malian capital, Bamako, as a symbolic political, diplomatic, and strategic step. Thus, Russia began opening a permanent mission in the Malian capital, Bamako, as a

symbolic political and diplomatic step toward extending this mission to the Sahel countries to manage its interests throughout the region (Majdi, 2025). This step builds on the outcomes of the visit of the foreign ministers of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso to Moscow in April 2025.

4.1.2.2 Military-security tools: Although there are no significant Russian military forces or bases in the Sahel and Africa to date, Russia is using the Wagner Group and the Africa Corps as military tools to protect its interests in the Sahel countries and a number of Central African states, as part of Russian security and military agreements with the countries of the region. Russian military-security tools can be viewed as follows:

4.1.2.2.1 *Wagner Group*: Founded in 2014 by its founder, Dmitry Utkin, and code-named "Wagner" after him, this group can be described as a Russian paramilitary organization, known as a "private military company" or proxy military force working for the Russian state (Karen,2025, P05). It has played roles in several armed conflicts and disputes in different regions of the world where Russian influence exists, such as Syria and Libya, and the Sahel region, such as Mali and Central Africa. And as much as, it sells security in these countries for financial returns, it also seeks to provide security to protect Russian interests in exchange for financial gains. Hence, (Nicholas,Seun,2025,P116) its role is dual: profitable for itself, and a security role for the countries concerned, securing Russian interests. What distinguishes the group is that it is distinguished by a well-known characteristic: its composition of professional Russian combatants (Al-Khoury, 2024, P5). It is ultimately a strategic mechanism and an integral part of Russia's foreign policy tools in its areas of influence, such as the Sahel region. It operates on behalf of the Russian state, with its overall mission of providing security and securing resources for Russian interests in Africa, and contributing to the spread of Russian influence on the continent in general. Among the main strategies and roles assigned to it in the Sahel are: (Asker,2025).

- Consolidating and expanding Russia's new influence in the Sahel:
- Support for transitional military regimes in the Sahel- Achieving Russian economic and geopolitical interests
- Combating so-called terrorism.

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So, The Wagner Group remains a Russian tool to support the realization, expansion and consolidation of Russian influence, especially in the Sahel –at least for the time being- alongside Russia's African influence generally.

4.1.2.2.2 **The Africa Corps** is a functional evolution of the Wagner Group's operating model. and This corps is a Russian military force that aims to strengthen Russian influence in Africa through military support and training in countries such as Libya, Burkina Faso, Mali, the Central African Republic (Nicholas,Seun,2025,P114), and Niger. The corps is directly supervised by the Russian Deputy Minister of Defense. Unlike the private Wagner Group, it is organizationally and financially linked to the Russian regime. And it is financially and organizationally linked to the Russian government following amendments made by Moscow to the Russian Armed Forces Budget Law (Karen,2025, P05).

The Corps' mission is to enhance Russian influence, challenge Western roles, combat terrorism, protect, secure Russia's geopolitical and economic interests. The Corps performs the same tasks as Wagner, but with a more formal, rather than specific, character. Its missions are directly subordinate to and governed by the Russian Ministry of Defense (Karen,2025, P06)..

4.1.2.3 **Economic tools:** Russia is focusing on reviving, revitalizing, and consolidating its influence in the Sahel region, through its economic mechanisms, relying on the duality of security and development, in a way that serves its interests, through economic cooperation that includes key sectors such as investment in sectors including the energy and mining sectors. In addition to investment in the technology and infrastructure sectors, trade, and Russian arms sales to countries in the Sahel region, trade volume between Russia and Africa increased by 10% in 2024, reflecting the development and expansion of trade partnerships in vital areas. The most important sectors can be viewed in:

4.1.2.3.1 **The energy And minerals sector:** Russia supports the Sahel countries of Africa by providing competitive energy sources through its oil and gas export activities and its participation in nuclear energy projects in these countries. in addition to investing in mineral and mineral resources, to become, through what Russia possesses of endless internal resources, and what it possesses through its companies in its areas of influence within Africa and the Sahel, a center of global power for energy and natural resources (Nicholas,Seun,2025,P116).

In contrast, Moscow also seeks to exploit the mineral resources of Sahel countries such as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, most notably gold, uranium, and other resources. Approximately 2,500 Russian businessmen, investors, and workers in the field of mineral and natural resources and other fields arrived in the Sahel Alliance countries between 2022 and 2024.

4.1.2.3.2 *Agriculture, trade and investment sector:* Although Russian investment in African agriculture and trade in general, and the Sahel in particular, is not at the same level as its investments in energy, minerals, and other sectors, there is growing Russian interest in agricultural cooperation in countries such as Mali, and Other Sahelian countries (Al-Khoury, 2024, P5). with the aim of securing grain supplies and expanding Russia's geopolitical influence. Investment is based primarily on grain supply agreements, support for private Russian agricultural and commercial companies, and the provision of consulting and expertise in advanced agricultural technologies (Majdi, 2025)

4.1.2.3.3 *Technology and Infrastructure Sector:* Russia seeks to contribute to infrastructure development projects such as railways and telecommunications networks, and supports the development of local industries, thus promoting sustainable development in the region. Russia is also working to transfer information technology to the Sahel and African countries. And This will enable local African companies to develop their capabilities and create dedicated digital platforms, enabling them to collaborate with Russian companies (Karen,2025, P06)...

4.1.2.3.4 *Strengthening the representation of Sahel countries in international forums.* Russia is working to support African demands for reform of the global financial system and increase Africa's representation in international institutions, (Al-Khoury, 2024, P5).. such as the United Nations. This bolsters Russia's positions in Africa, further securing its interests in the Sahel region.

4.1.2.3.5 *Trade fairs and promotions:* Russia's interest in the Sahel region is not limited to economic aspects only. but rather, to hold Russian trade fairs in African and Sahel countries in order to promoting Russian industries in the fields of agriculture, heavy and light engineering, and military and civilian equipment, as well as Russian interest in other fields such as education, culture, and health, with the aim of enhancing the prospects of new Russian influence in Africa in general through the gateway to the Sahel region.

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In summary, the Russian tools employed to consolidate its influence in the Sahel include diplomatic, military-security, and economic tools, in addition to numerous other tools.

Prospects for the new Russian influence in the Sahel:

Given the reality of current Russian influence, its opportunities and challenges, its future prospects in the African Sahel may not go beyond one of the possible scenarios.

4.1.3.1 Continued expansion scenario: If Russia aims in the foreseeable future to consolidate or expand its influence through cooperation in the fields of technology and infrastructure, by seeking to invest in projects that meet the needs of the Sahel countries, this will guarantee it a strong and sustainable foothold. To the extent that Russia benefits from leveraging the growing trend toward strengthening the internal security of Sahel countries through the provision of intelligence and training support (Al-Khoury, 2024, P5), this will likely make it a reliable partner for the region's governments in confronting their growing security challenges, particularly if it succeeds in establishing itself as a major supplier of vital technologies, techniques, and knowledge. And seems its self As the ideal partner in several fields, including energy and infrastructure, while relying on political flexibility to balance its interests with the demands and requirements of its local and regional partners. (Majdi, 2025).

4.1.3 Gradual Decline Scenario: in light of the data indicating that the African Sahel region has become a pivotal arena for global competition, it is impossible to ignore the involvement of China, the West, and some regional powers in strengthening their relations with the Sahel countries (Alexander, 2004, P28).., especially China, which follows a softer approach compared to Russia , and it appears to be more politically and economically comfortable than Russia, which is preoccupied with security problems on its borders, which may constitute a decline in Russia's influence in the Sahel and preempt China (Majdi, 2025).. It is expected that the future of Chinese influence in the Sahel region will be strong and increasing, supported by economic and investment policies aimed at securing natural resources and supporting infrastructure projects within the Belt and Road Initiative, despite security challenges. China is also likely to continue to play a more effective and pivotal role than Russia in financing projects, strengthening diplomatic relations with countries in the region (Shadi, 2025,p 05).., and expanding its presence through regional

organizations, thus enhancing its economic and political influence in the region (Alexander, 2004, P27).

In contrast, Russia faces serious challenges, highlighted by the internal turmoil in the Sahel countries. And the economic pressures resulting from the sanctions imposed on it.

4.1.3.3. *Multilateral Cooperation Scenario:* Regarding to the complexity of the geopolitical situation in the Sahel and the growing Western international involvement in it, Russia may be expected to continue its cautious strategy of strengthening its influence, taking advantage of the West's weaknesses and the region's countries' need for security and stability (Majdi, 2025).. It is also expected to adopt a dual approach to multilateral cooperation: with the countries of the region, on the one hand, to ensure its influence in each of them at least, and cooperation between itself and, other regional powers with, which Moscow maintains cooperative relations, along with China, which may lead to a balance of common interests (Shadi, 2025,p 04). While acknowledging the existence of mutual concerns between Moscow and Beijing, Despite their historical conflicts, they are united by a shared desire to gain American recognition of the global situation, they both deserve from their shared perspective (Shadi, 2025,p 04). Therefore, to prevent Moscow from appearing weak vis-à-vis Beijing, given the latter's increasing economic dependence on Beijing as a result of Western sanctions, Russia's military presence in Africa in general and the Sahel in particular is expected to serve as a counterbalance to China's growing economic influence across the continent in general and the Sahel in particular.

With the result of this section, it can be said that the most important pillars of Russian influence in the African Sahel remain based on; internal and external motives and objectives linked to Russian strategic dimensions, and as much as they contribute to strengthening this influence in the context, the measurement of its effectiveness or lack thereof remains subject to whether it is actually able to establish and sustain this influence. In contrast, it measures the effectiveness of the tools used by other international actors in the midst of regional competition. The region faces challenges of varying nature, which determine the path taken by Russian influence in the region, whether toward development and expansion or toward multilateral cooperation.

CONCLUSION

In light of Russia's ambitions to become an impact "superpower," it realizes that achieving these dimensions can only be achieved by building the foundations of comprehensive power and exploiting all its borders, most importantly by forming global spheres of influence. It represents a double-edged sword within a broader Russian strategy. It is restoring its national glory as an influential global power in world affairs, reshaping alliances, testing capabilities and the limits of power, and acquiring spheres of influence in a world that appears to be moving toward multipolarity

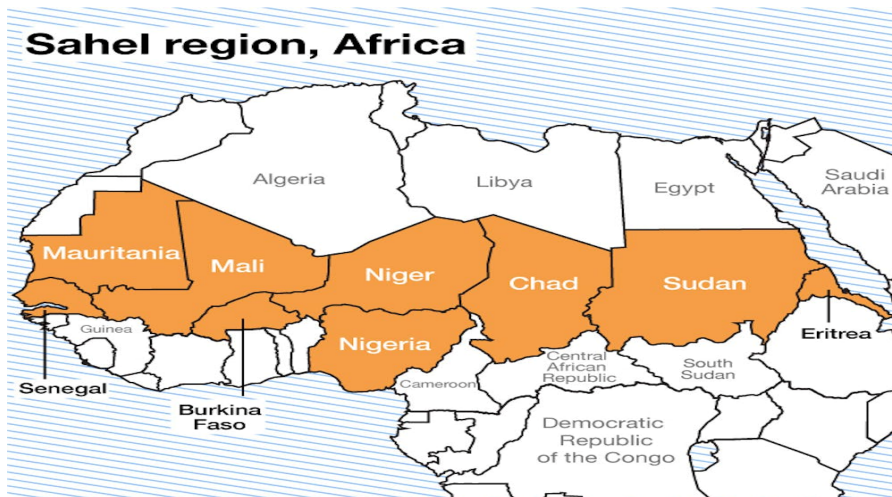
Therefore, in conclusion, the foundations of Russia's new approach to the African Sahel region, in general, do not deviate from the scope of this broader Russian strategy, and they constitute an important part of it. To the extent that it appears to be a strategy based on Russia's bright historical legacy in Africa, it is more sincere in its support for the continent than the West—as many believe—As far as it is primarily related to the geostrategic and strategic importance of the Sahel region in Russia's strategic perception, especially in light of the region's security exposure in a comprehensive concept, which has formed a regional support for Russia to crystallize its influence therein, In addition to this international pillar related to Russia's competitive/conflictual calculations with its major international strategic opponents/rivals regarding the acquisition of areas of global influence in general, and in the Sahel region specifically, which in turn influences the re-crystallization of Russian influence there.

In addition to this, Russia's orientations in the Sahel region are based on a set of pillars, including regional and international foundations, as well as internal and external motives and objectives related to the content of its strategic dimensions, and tools as mechanisms for emerging as a global power, hoping that these pillars directed towards the Sahel and its African depth, A goal and a means at the same time to avoid the Western sanctions imposed on it on the one hand, and to export its products, and control the global energy markets of oil, gas, and raw uranium, in addition to the endless mineral and mining wealth that the region abounds with, and what it possesses through its companies in its areas of influence within the Sahel and Africa on the other hand, To become a global powerhouse of energy and natural resources, which, combined with its military strength and historical legacy, enables it to achieve a balance with its more

powerful competitors, such as the United States, the European Union, and China, and to possess pressure tools capable of achieving its interests.

And Therefore, Russia has been employing various available tools: active and purposeful diplomacy, urgent military and security tools that can be increased as needed, or economic and commercial tools, as mechanisms to achieve its current goals in the region. And the pursuit of sustainability or expansion of its coastal influence and targeting the African continental depth in the horizons, while acknowledging the existence of abundant regional challenges and looming global ones.

Figure : Geographical Map Shows The Sahel region of Africa



Source: Al-Manar TV website, “The African Sahel Region... the Global Center of Terrorism!” Published on 03/07/2025, accessed on 06/06/2025 at the following link:

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