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Burkina: Pressures on Sankara



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An Intelligence Assessment

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*ALA 86-10036
August 1986*

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Burkina: Pressures on Sankara [Redacted]

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted]
Office of African and Latin American Analysis, with
a contribution from [Redacted] Office of
Leadership Analysis. It was coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations. [Redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Africa Division, ALA, [Redacted]
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**Burkina:
Pressures on Sankara**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 24 July 1986
was used in this report.*

The populist regime of Burkina's President Thomas Sankara, which took power in August 1983, appears to be firmly in control for the moment but is likely to face increasing challenges from both the extreme left and the military over the next year. As public frustration with the country's economic plight grows, we estimate that radicals will have new opportunities to press their policies, which include a close alignment with Libya and the Soviet Union. [Redacted]

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In our view, Sankara's most serious threat comes from the Patriotic League for Development (LIPAD), a small pro-Soviet party that helped him come to power and has some support among students, civil servants, trade unions, and certain sectors of the military. Although Sankara ousted members of LIPAD from the government in 1984, he has reappointed a few in the past year, apparently believing they have renounced their revolutionary objectives, according to US Embassy reporting. We believe they are probably attempting to redirect Burkina toward more radical policies, while privately intensifying efforts to build support among disgruntled urban dwellers, trade unionists, and military officers. [Redacted]

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There are growing signs that the 7,600-man armed forces are dissatisfied with what they view as Sankara's lackluster leadership and are likely to challenge his policies over the next year. [Redacted] indicates that both officers and enlisted men are frustrated with Sankara's refusal to upgrade military capabilities, his frequent purges of the officer corps, and the insertion of "political watchdogs" to spy on potential military malcontents. Moreover, many officers remain angry over Sankara's reluctance to avenge Burkina's military defeat by neighboring Mali in the so-called Christmas war last December. Although a coup by disgruntled officers is possible and pressure from the ranks is likely to grow, we believe that Sankara's frequent purges and the control of key military units by close advisers would work against a successful takeover in the near term. [Redacted]

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Burkina's economic decline also will continue to undermine Sankara's ability to rule. According to the US Embassy, despite two years of austerity and some positive social welfare programs, living standards in Burkina remain among the lowest in the world, and unfulfilled public expectations are further reducing the limited popular support Sankara now enjoys. Two decades of drought and the continued spread of the desert have

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eroded any potential for a substantial increase in agricultural production and have left unfulfilled the pledge Sankara made in 1983 to make Burkina self-sufficient in food. Burkina's own swelling population, increased by a rising pool of migrants from more severely affected Sahelian nations, will further strain the country's limited resources over the longer term. [redacted]

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Although Sankara is unhappy with the meager levels of Libyan and Soviet economic aid, we believe that because of Sankara's obsession with security matters Moscow and Tripoli could easily gain influence with offers of much-needed military assistance. At the same time, we suspect that the Libyans will work behind the scenes to undermine Sankara and replace him with a more pliant leader who would more actively serve their interests. If asked, Libya would almost certainly offer military and security aid to replace the hardware lost during the Christmas war and to bolster Sankara's personal security in exchange for the use of Burkina as a transit point for aid to Ivorian and Togolese dissidents. We also expect that Moscow will probably work behind the scenes to assist LIPAD in nudging Burkina toward more radical policies. [redacted]

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Burkina's relations with the West are likely to fluctuate as Sankara attempts to balance his need for Western economic assistance with his desire to demonstrate his revolutionary credentials. Sankara probably will continue to lash out against the United States and France on occasion, while privately reassuring Paris—Burkina's largest aid donor and trading partner—that his rhetoric is designed only for internal consumption. France will probably tolerate Sankara's posturing as long as it believes he is holding to his pledge not to export his "revolution" or permit the Libyans or the Soviets to use Burkina as a base from which to subvert French interests in the region, such as Burkina's moderate neighbors—Ivory Coast, Togo, and Niger. [redacted]

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Should Sankara fall from power, we believe Burkina would enter a chaotic period in which Tripoli and Moscow would probably benefit. Most potential successors lack the leadership skills necessary to hold on to power for long and probably would seek external assistance, from Libya or the USSR, to ensure the security of their rule. We also believe any successor would be vulnerable to pressures from LIPAD and its affiliated trade union for a role in the government. Any new regime, moreover, would be hard pressed to cope with the country's economic decline and with restlessness among the military and the urban elite. [redacted]

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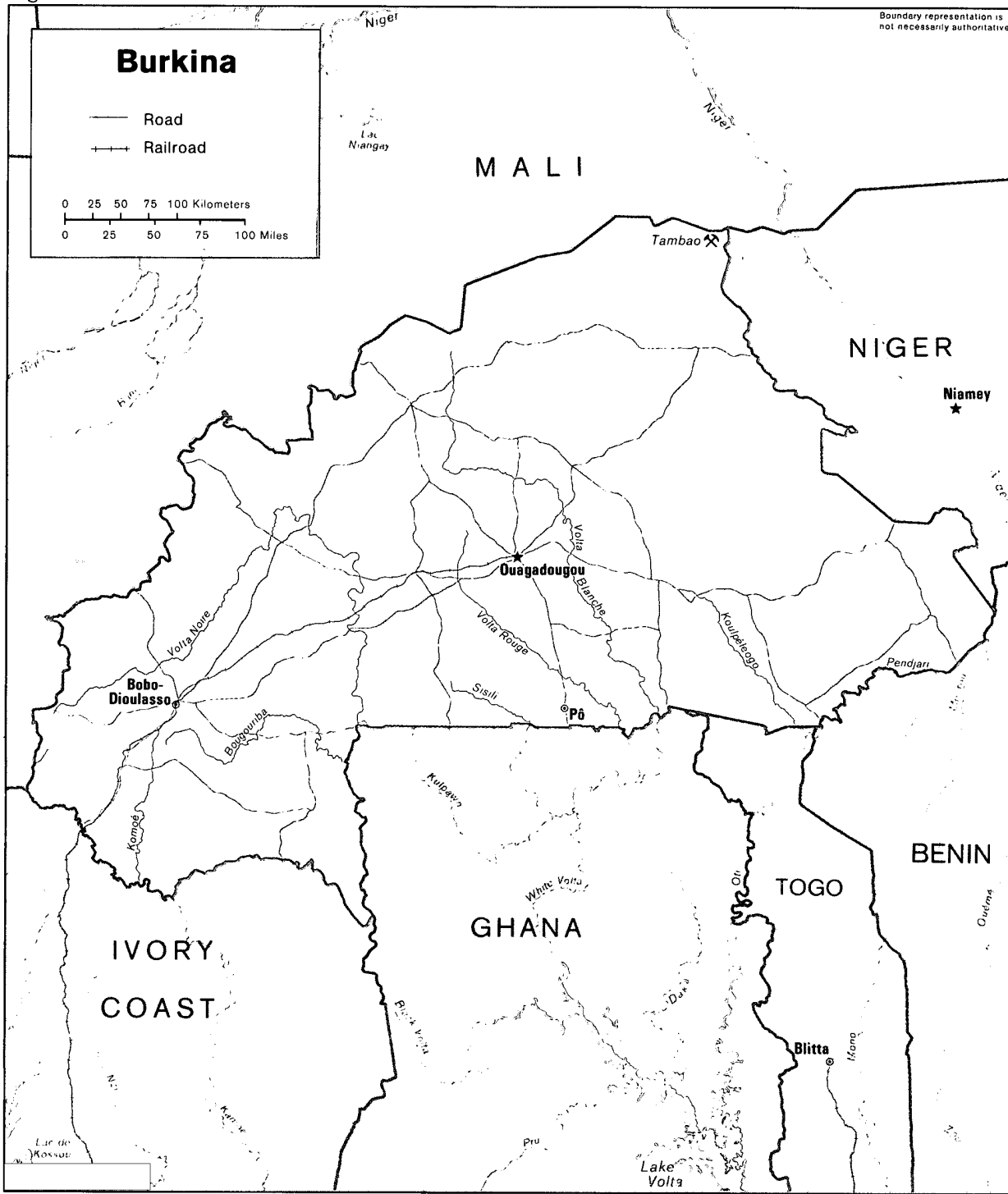
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Figure 1



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**Burkina:
Pressures on Sankara**

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Introduction

President Thomas Sankara faces serious political and economic problems that we believe are gradually undermining his rule and are likely to usher in a period of instability. One of Sankara's major challenges comes from a group of hardcore, influential Marxists who helped him seize power in 1983, but most of whom now oppose his rule. The military also is likely to pose a threat as the rank and file becomes increasingly disenchanted with Sankara's performance. Moreover, Sankara's support among the youth and peasantry also will probably wane if he is unable, as seems likely, to reverse Burkina's economic deterioration. Foreign influences, especially French, Libyan, and Soviet, have the potential to affect outcomes in this economically dependent country. This paper examines Sankara's declining fortunes and assesses the prospects for the regime's survival over the next two years. In doing so, it factors in the role of external actors and explores scenarios under which Libya or the USSR might make significant advances in the country. [Redacted]

Managing the Revolution

Upon seizing power in 1983, Sankara launched a populist revolution he claimed represented the interests of the "common man," but his erratic course as President has made clear that he lacks a political focus. Nonetheless, US Embassy reporting suggests Sankara remains an appealing leader for many—he is widely viewed as heroic and incorruptible—and his efforts to improve living standards, as well as his flamboyant nonaligned rhetoric, play to the crowd. His sometimes feckless policies, however, and his reliance on repression and violence to eliminate real and imagined opponents have alienated the traditional elite. Sankara's pretensions that his populist regime is a new Third World model, his eccentric behavior toward foreign benefactors, and his apparent paranoia about subversion have all made him an object of suspicion within the region and abroad. [Redacted]

Sankara's Rise to Power

Sankara began his rise to power in November 1982, when as an Army Captain and key garrison commander he helped to install Maj. Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo as President. In January 1983 Ouedraogo appointed Sankara Prime Minister, but friction between the two developed quickly as Sankara sought alliances with Libya and Ghana, while Ouedraogo preferred to maintain traditional links to France and Ivory Coast. In a desperate attempt to curb Sankara's influence, in May 1983 Ouedraogo placed him under arrest for a few weeks. [Redacted]

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Backed by key military personnel, leftist trade unionists and intellectuals, Sankara toppled Ouedraogo in August 1983. Troops loyal to Sankara, armed with weapons provided by Libya, met little resistance from disorganized government forces, according to the US Embassy. According to press reports [Redacted] Sankara said he seized power to end widespread government corruption. [Redacted]

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Sankara quickly consolidated his rule by purging the civil service and officer corps of suspected disloyal members. Launching an ostensibly nonaligned foreign policy, he forged close ties to Libya and established diplomatic relations with Cuba. In 1983 and 1984, he repeatedly accused France of plotting to engineer his ouster. In August 1984, Sankara changed the name of his country from Upper Volta to Burkina, as part of the "decolonization" process. The name roughly translates as "Land of Upright People." [Redacted]

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Sankara's Brand of Populism

Sankara's words and deeds reveal his unorthodox national and world views. His proclaimed design for Burkina envisions a society in which wealth is equitably distributed, women have equal rights, and social

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justice prevails. The regime's sole theoretical tract—a vague political document, "Treatise of Orientation," issued shortly after the coup—promises a "popular democratic revolution" leading to a classless society, and calls for economic self-sufficiency. Sankara's vision for domestic change, however, appears to have little substance beyond these captions. The US Embassy reports that he is often impulsive and unpredictable, and gets carried away with his own rhetoric, rarely considering the consequences of his acts. For example, in 1984 he suspended for one year rent and mortgage payments, which are taxable, failing to realize the consequences of the loss in badly needed government revenues. [redacted]

Fiercely nationalistic, Sankara publicly rejects both Eastern and Western political models and claims his regime will become the new example of Third World development, according to the US Embassy. Embassy sources indicate that Sankara's world view is shaped by his obsession with power and by irrational fears that domestic and foreign opposition—including the Vatican—are bent on toppling him. This mind-set may account for his habit of publicly lashing out at France, the United States, the USSR, and Libya for their failure to provide substantial economic aid and for their "imperialist" aggressions. [redacted]

While Sankara's proclivity is to attack the West verbally, he has nevertheless proved willing at times to compromise his views to achieve practical results. In an effort to generate additional Western foreign aid, he has implemented a financial austerity program established in 1985 and has made no effort to collectivize or redistribute land or nationalize the private sector. Although Sankara has publicly emphasized solidarity with African and Third World movements, such as the South-West Africa People's Organization and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and has established closer ties to such states as North Korea and Cuba, the US Embassy reports that he also tries privately to reassure traditional Western donors that he values their friendship and assistance. [redacted]

Maintaining Control

Despite his avowed idealistic principles, Sankara has moved ruthlessly against real and imagined threats, and, for the moment, appears to be firmly in control.

According to the US Embassy and international human rights organizations, alleged coup plotters and other opponents have been executed and regime opponents tortured and murdered. In 1984 the US Embassy reported the execution of seven high-level military officers and government officials for coup plotting, despite lack of evidence, and in July 1985 it reported that Sankara's security apparatus assassinated a leading dissident living in Ivory Coast. [redacted]

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Sankara's concern with his own safety is underscored by his creation of an extensive security network. A variety of US Embassy sources indicate that Sankara depends on a security service of unknown size to quash potential opposition. It is run, these sources add, by a French expatriate trained in Cuba and Czechoslovakia, and reportedly has ties to the French terrorist group Direct Action. In addition, Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs)¹—created shortly after Sankara took power to carry out social action programs—serve as the regime's "eyes and ears," according to US Embassy reporting, and are present in almost all sectors of Burkinan society. The Committees, often composed of uneducated youths, act as local police and organize progovernment rallies. According to the Embassy, the CDRs have moved effectively against antiregime protests and on at least two occasions—in 1983 and 1984—dispersed trade union demonstrations. Embassy reporting indicates that the CDRs are viewed with suspicion by most Burkinabe. [redacted]

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Challenges in the Wings

Despite any threat Sankara may feel, [redacted] he is in command of the situation and under no near-term threat. We believe, however, that a resurgence of the extreme left and grumbling in the Army will make him increasingly vulnerable over the next year, particularly if he is

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¹ The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution are modeled on similar groups in Ethiopia, Cuba, Libya, and Ghana. They are intended to build grassroots support for the central government and to serve as an unofficial intelligence service. [redacted]

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unable to cope with his main substantive challenge: how to halt Burkina's economic decline. US Embassy and defense attache reporting indicates that the extreme left is working behind the scenes to build a base of support among civil servants and possibly within the military. [redacted]

[redacted]

Narrow Base of Support

Although the US Embassy reports Sankara has the support of the urban poor and probably of the peasantry, he has alienated Burkina's civilian elite, composed of civil servants, trade unionists, and businessmen. The peasantry probably has benefited somewhat from his emphasis on rural development, and the urban poor realized some small gains from government efforts to provide improved health care and better housing. However, Sankara angered government workers in 1984 by cutting wages and threatening to fire them if they did not work hard enough or demanded higher salaries. Moreover, many businessmen complain about high taxes and lack of incentives for the private sector, while many former government managers have fled to Ivory Coast and France, according to the US Embassy. Sankara has ruthlessly repressed the traditionally powerful trade unions—composed of more than 10,000 civil servants and urban workers—which have played an instrumental role in every change of government since independence.² According to US Embassy reporting, Sankara has imprisoned some union leaders, intimidated most others, and banned strikes. [redacted]

Sankara's circle of advisers is even more narrow than his constituency. He tries to foster the image of a broad-based leadership by claiming that the National Council for the Revolution (CNR) rules Burkina; but its membership is a state secret, and, according to the US Embassy, it is rumored to exist only on paper. The Embassy also reports that in practice key decisions are made by the President and three key officials: Defense Minister Jean-Baptiste Lingani, Minister of

² According to academic studies, massive strikes forced Burkina's first president to abdicate in 1966; pressured the next ruler, President Lamizana, to form a civilian government a decade later; and weakened that government so drastically by 1980 that the Army seized power. [redacted]

Economic Promotions Henri Zongo—both of whom control key Army units in or near the capital—and Minister of Justice Blaise Compaore. These men helped Sankara engineer the coup in 1983 and remain responsible for the regime's security. [redacted]

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We believe Sankara could be vulnerable to a coup attempt by any of his three advisers, particularly if they become convinced that his popularity is eroding.³ According to the US Embassy, rumors of conflict between Compaore and Sankara surface occasionally, but we have no corroborative evidence. Some unconfirmed US Embassy sources claim that Compaore distrusts the extreme left and engineered its removal from the government in 1984. [redacted]

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[redacted] Unconfirmed US Embassy sources report that Zongo is pro-Soviet and that he generally handles contacts with Moscow and Tripoli. [redacted] Lingani is a relative moderate, and the [redacted] [redacted] he is probably the most competent officer in the military. [redacted]

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Pressures From the Extreme Left

US Embassy and press reports suggest that the Patriotic League for Development (LIPAD)—a Marxist party temporarily allied with Sankara in 1983—hopes to regain its influence. LIPAD, whose members Sankara purged from the regime in 1984 on suspicion that they were trying to oust him, now considers Sankara a military dictator who is not following a true "revolutionary" path, according to US Embassy reporting. Formed in the early 1970s, LIPAD—which advocates a Soviet-style revolution—has some 400 members and supporters, principally among the country's students, intellectuals, and trade unions. US Embassy reporting also indicates that LIPAD has some support among civil servants and probably limited backing in the military. Moreover, Burkina's largest trade union, the Confederation of Unions of

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[redacted]

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Thomas Sankara and His Inner Circle



Capt. Thomas Sankara regards himself as one of Africa's leading revolutionaries and an example for young African officers to emulate. The US Embassy reports that he admires Ghana's nationalist leader, Jerry Rawlings—with whom he probably identifies—and the two maintain regular contact. According to Embassy and press reporting, he is intelligent and charismatic, and prides himself as a hero to African youth. He publicly stresses hard work, honesty, and discipline as the most important qualities for his government and people.

[Redacted]

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Sankara, 38, received military training in Madagascar and France. He earned a reputation as a war hero during the 1974 border conflict with Mali. During the late 1970s he commanded the regiment at Po, served on the Army's General Staff, and in 1981 served briefly as Minister for Information in the conservative Zerbo administration.

[Redacted]

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Blaise Compaore. Although he is the Minister of Justice and, according to US Embassy reporting, the regime's second in command, Compaore spends most of his time at the military garrison he commands at Po, near the Ghanaian border.

[Redacted]

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Reports of his differences with Sankara surface occasionally but remain unsubstantiated. Although Embassy sources claim that he was the force behind LIPAD's removal from power in 1984, others depict him as a Marxist who privately presses for the radicalization of the revolution.

[Redacted]

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Compaore, 35, entered the Army in the early 1970s and subsequently received military training in France, Morocco, and Cameroon. His instructors in Paris and Yaounde found him retiring but hardworking. He served in the 1970s in various staff positions, in 1980 was appointed to the General Staff, and in 1981 became commander of the commando training garrison at Po.

[Redacted]

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Thomas Sankara and His Inner Circle (continued)



Henri Zongo, the Minister of Economic Promotions, probably is the third-most-powerful official. Despite his portfolio, he appears to take little interest in economic matters and rarely travels abroad to discuss Burkina's financial needs, US Embassy reporting indicates. He is described as hard working [redacted] and appears to be the most radical of Sankara's three advisers. Zongo spends most of his time at Camp Komboise, a 400-man garrison he commands just north of the capital. [redacted] 25X6 25X1

The US Embassy reports the 36-year-old career Army officer received military training in France and Cameroon in the 1970s. He played an active role in the 1982 coup and was one of the major participants of Sankara's 1983 coup. [redacted] 25X1



Jean-Baptiste Lingani. Lingani, who serves as Defense Minister and Commander of the Defense Forces, is described by various Embassy sources as a relative moderate, who allegedly views the United States favorably. According to Embassy and [redacted] he is a workaholic and commands the respect of the enlisted men. [redacted] [redacted] He reportedly is content in his present position and does not seek to rule the country. [redacted] 25X1 25X1 25X1 25X1

The 39-year-old Lingani entered the military in 1964 and received several years of military training in France. In the 1970s he served as commander of the military bases in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. Since assuming the Defense portfolio, he has traveled to the USSR, North Korea, Cuba, and Libya, and has visited Algeria several times. According to the US Embassy, he represented Burkina at a Soviet Party Congress and had close contact with the Bulgarian Prime Minister. He is married to the daughter of former President Lamizana. [redacted] 25X1

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Burkina (CSB), is closely aligned with LIPAD, and its president—imprisoned in January 1985 for organizing an antigovernment strike—is a key LIPAD theoretician, according to the US Embassy. [redacted]

Sankara, apparently believing he has co-opted at least some LIPAD members, has allowed them to regain a limited role in the government. The US Embassy reports that in the past year Sankara has reappointed a few LIPAD members to government posts, probably believing that they no longer pose a threat to him and that he can exploit their radical impulses, especially in foreign policy. US Embassy reporting indicates that former Foreign Minister Diallo, a LIPAD leader who was released from prison last year, serves as a foreign affairs adviser. We suspect Diallo may try to use his position to promote closer ties to the Soviet Union. [redacted]

Grumbling in the Military

Recognizing that Burkina's 7,600-man military remains the ultimate source of power, Sankara relies on a carrot and stick approach to maintain its allegiance. He periodically purges suspected opponents from its ranks and has not hesitated to execute alleged coup plotters, according to US Embassy reporting. Most pro-Western officers fled to Ivory Coast following Sankara's coup, and Sankara has assigned others of questionable loyalty to remote posts in the far north, [redacted] The defense attache also notes that Sankara awards special financial bonuses to key officers, and the enlisted men are well paid on a regular basis. [redacted]

Nevertheless, we believe that several sources of discontent could eventually lead to coup plotting among military personnel. [redacted] that officers are frustrated with the poor state of equipment and chronic shortage of supplies. The Army has few operational trucks, no tanks, and poor communications facilities, and the Air Force is usually grounded as a result of maintenance problems and a lack of spare parts. Sankara contends that Burkina cannot afford to use its limited resources to improve its military capabilities substantially, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

In our view, Sankara's ineffectual leadership during the recent border war with Mali probably damaged his standing with the armed forces. US Embassy and defense attache reporting indicates that Sankara committed a number of tactical errors, such as refusing to mobilize key military units, failing to send reinforcements to the north, and relying on armed civilians to do some of the fighting. Some of his officers believe he underestimated the scope of the Malian offensive and, according to US Embassy reporting, they are now criticizing him for not wanting to avenge Burkina's defeat. [redacted]

Still another source of discontent is the presence of CDRs in the military's ranks, serving as political "watchdogs." [redacted] every military unit contains such a committee, probably composed of no more than six persons led by a junior or noncommissioned officer who oversees political education and conformity to "revolutionary principles." [redacted] that some officers regard CDR personnel as government spies who occasionally undercut the authority of commanding officers and ignore the military chain of command. We believe officers resent lower ranking personnel monitoring their activities and challenging their orders. [redacted]

Reversing Economic Decline

Sankara's political problems are compounded by Burkina's precarious economic condition. A mix of chronic poverty and ill-conceived government projects are undermining Sankara's efforts to implement austerity measures needed to stem Burkina's economic deterioration. Sankara has introduced a number of pragmatic economic reforms to help preserve scarce financial resources. He imposed stiff austerity budgets and, according to press reports, since 1983 workers' real take-home pay has been slashed by some 40 percent as a result of a wage freeze. The US Embassy reports Sankara also reduced the overstaffed civil service to cut the budget deficit. [redacted]

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The Christmas War

The six-day war, in which Mali seized a small strip of the disputed northern frontier, stemmed from Bamako's hope that the conflict would spark a coup in Burkina. US Embassy reporting indicates that Malian President Traore believed the conflict would give Burkinan dissidents the opportunity to overthrow Sankara, and that the new government would negotiate a territorial settlement favorable to his country. Traore also probably hoped that a war would distract public opinion away from Mali's unpopular economic austerity measures. [redacted]

The war underscored historical frictions between the two countries. Hostilities over the ill-defined border flared briefly in 1973 and 1974. Although both parties submitted the dispute for World Court arbitration in 1983, and delineated their long western border in 1985, relations have been strained in the past two years, according to the US Embassy. Malian President Traore increasingly views Sankara as naive and immature, while Sankara publicly depicts Traore as "inept", "senile", and "corrupt." Moreover, in late 1985 Sankara publicly commented that a "revolution" would benefit the Malian people, according to press reports. [redacted]

Mali began mobilizing its forces in early December, about the same time Burkina publicly announced that census takers would visit four villages in the disputed zone. [redacted]

[redacted] US Embassy and [redacted] that Burkinan military units were neither mobilized nor put on alert before Mali's attack on 25 December. [redacted]

In the six days of fighting, Mali's Army overran the poorly armed Burkinabe soldiers and civilians stationed in the north. According to sketchy Embassy reporting, Sankara chose not to mobilize the regular Army units based in the capital—some one-third of the Army is deployed there—but preferred to have

the lightly armed Committees for the Defense of the Revolution do some of the fighting. Moreover, Sankara reinforced his southern flank, mistakenly believing that Mali would attempt to seize Burkina's second-largest city, Bobo-Dioulasso. Burkina had no defense against Malian air attacks on its northern garrisons and airfields. According to a variety of Embassy and press reports, about 300 Burkinan and Malian soldiers died in the war. [redacted]

Libya sought to exploit the war to expand its regional influence, according to the US Embassy. [redacted]

[redacted] Although Tripoli was aware of Traore's intentions, Qadhafi chose not to inform Sankara, Embassy reporting indicates. In our view, Qadhafi probably welcomed the war, believing that Sankara would have no choice but to call in Libyan troops to prevent his downfall. During the conflict, Qadhafi unsuccessfully sought to send peacekeeping troops to the disputed region, hoping to present himself as a neutral party—probably to gain permanent access to both countries. According to US Embassy reporting, moderate neighboring states, led by Senegal and Ivory Coast, launched a series of diplomatic initiatives to end the war because they feared a prolonged conflict would result in Libyan military intervention on behalf of Sankara. [redacted]

The war ended on 1 January 1986 with a cease-fire negotiated under the regional Nonaggression and Defense Aid Agreement pact. Press reports indicated that, under the provisions of this accord, the seven-member organization dispatched observers to the disputed zone, Mali withdrew its forces from the area it had seized, and the two sides exchanged prisoners of war. The observer force will remain in place until the World Court makes its ruling, which is expected later this year. According to academic studies and press reports, Burkina has a much stronger case, based on historic claims supported by French colonial maps. Both parties have agreed to abide by the decision. [redacted]

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Burkina's Economy

Burkina is categorized by the World Bank as one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, with a per capita income of only \$160. The country relies almost entirely on agricultural exports—mainly cotton—to earn foreign exchange, and about 90 percent of the work force eke out an existence as subsistence farmers. Foreign aid from the West, crucial for government operations, has averaged some \$200 million a year since 1979, while remittances from emigrant workers in neighboring Ivory Coast provide at least 15 percent of GDP. Burkina has few exploitable natural resources. Although its mineral wealth includes high-grade manganese, zinc, silver, gold, and limestone, the deposits are in isolated regions with poor transport networks, and the government has failed to attract the foreign capital necessary to make large-scale exploitation feasible, according to the US Embassy. Burkina has no known petroleum or gas reserves. Some 95 percent of the population is illiterate, and the average life expectancy is 42 years, well below the average for Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the World Health Organization, Burkina has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world.

Drought is firmly entrenched in the north and continues to spread southward. Aid workers estimate that only 20 percent of the land is arable. In the early 1970s, Burkina was ravaged by the Sahelian drought, which caused the death of at least 200,000 people and 2 million cattle in the country. Although Burkina is not now among the Sahelian countries most seriously threatened by drought, some 500,000 Burkinabe are affected annually, according to US Embassy and press reports. Burkina produces only about 10 percent of its food needs and the US Embassy and relief workers predict regional food deficits in the next one to two years, with fairly regular surpluses in the south but severe deficits in the north. Food production cannot keep pace with Burkina's rapidly growing population, which, according to academic studies, will increase from the present 7 million to over 10 million by the year 2000. Moreover, migrants from neighboring Mali and Niger, seeking to escape more serious conditions in their countries, are likely to increase Burkina's food requirements and strain relief efforts over the longer term.

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Nevertheless, the regime wastes scarce capital on highly visible but ill-planned projects. According to US Embassy and press reports, Sankara's plan to build a railroad from Ouagadougou to the northern city of Tambao, at a cost of some \$70 million, has faltered because of insufficient funding. Western donors believe the railroad—designed to transport manganese ore to the capital—is unnecessary and not cost efficient. A similar problem exists with Sankara's Bagre dam undertaking. Western donors believe that, even if Burkina raises enough funds to complete the dam, low water levels probably will leave it inoperable. According to Embassy reporting, construction of an international airport in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina's second-largest city, may also become a white elephant if the government cannot secure the additional funding needed for its completion.

Opportunities for Libyan and Communist Gains

We believe worsening economic conditions, coupled with restiveness within the military and Sankara's exaggerated fears of external aggression, will provide opportunities for Libya, Cuba, and possibly the Soviet Union to make new inroads over the next several years. Although Burkina's ties to Moscow and Tripoli have been limited by Sankara's disillusionment with what he perceives as stingy Libyan and Communist support for his populist revolution, Tripoli continues to provide military assistance to Burkina while Cuba assists the intelligence service, according to US Embassy reporting. For its part, Libya probably views Burkina as a potential base from which to subvert the

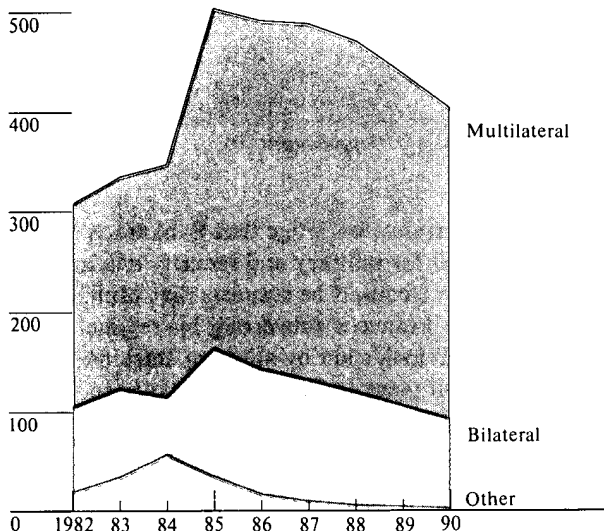
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Figure 2
Burkina: Total Foreign Public Debt, 1982-90^a

Million US \$
 600

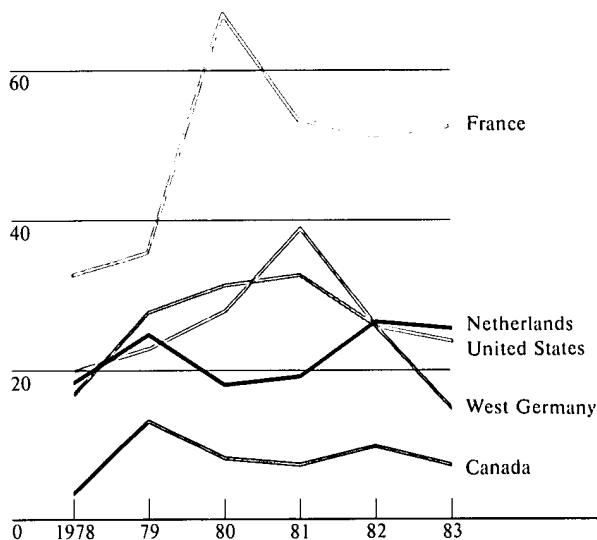


^a 1985 estimated; 1986-90 projected.

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Figure 3
Official Development Assistance to Burkina, 1978-83

Million US \$
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pro-Western governments in neighboring Ivory Coast and Togo, while Moscow, in its effort to bolster leftist movements, probably sees LIPAD as a potential source of significant domestic political support. [redacted]

Libya

Libya provided military arms for Sankara's coup in 1983, but the close relationship this portended has not developed. Relations have cooled, in part as a result of Libya's failure to provide substantial economic aid, according to the US Embassy. Over the past two years Tripoli has made only token donations of food and medical aid. In November 1984 Sankara accused Tripoli of renegeing on a promise to provide a \$10 million loan to help finance construction of the Tam-bao railway, despite denials by Libyan officials of any

such commitment, the US Embassy reports. Tripoli's military aid since the coup has consisted of seven Italian-made SF-260 light tactical support aircraft, which are maintained by six Libyan Air Force personnel in Ouagadougou, and some small arms and ammunition. Adding to Burkina's disenchantment, many of [redacted]

In 1984 Burkina withdrew its 45 military cadets from Tripoli because of poor living conditions and harsh treatment by Libyan instructors. Six Libyan instructors reportedly serve at the military garrison at Po. [redacted]

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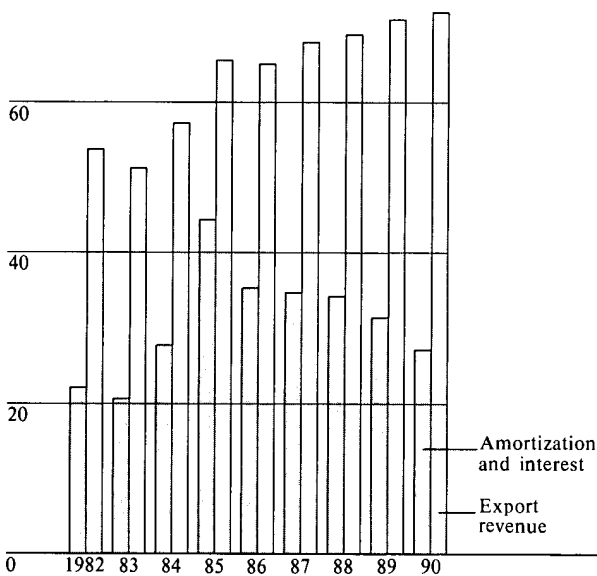
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Figure 4
Burkina: Debt Service and Export
Revenue, 1982-90^a

Million US \$
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^a 1985 estimated; 1986-90 projected.

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Libya is probably equally unhappy with the way the relationship has developed. Although Sankara agreed in 1983 to allow Libya to convert its embassy into a People's Bureau—currently staffed by about 20 Libyans—he has rebuffed Libyan offers to provide funding for mosques, and refused to allow the distribution of Qadhafi's *Green Book* in Burkina. The US Embassy reports the Libyans so far have unsuccessfully courted the Muslim community, which constitutes some 30 percent of the population. Moreover, Sankara has publicly criticized Libya's regional role, probably in order to assert his independence and to dispel regional fears that he is Qadhafi's pawn. He has rejected Libyan pressures for a security pact, publicly depicted the Libyan-Moroccan union as a betrayal of the Saharan people, deplored the Libyan military presence in Chad, and belittled Libyan financial aid to West Africa, according to US Embassy reporting.



Libyan military arms in Ouagadougou.

Despite these strains, we judge that Sankara is likely to turn to Libya for military and security aid, and possibly Libyan troops, if he suspects that Mali, Togo, Ivory Coast, or France is subverting his regime. He might attract Tripoli's aid by allowing Burkina to be used as a transit point for Libyan assistance to dissidents in the region. Under such a scenario, we think Sankara would be unlikely to request the kinds of weapons, such as tanks and fighter aircraft, that would draw attention to a "Libyan connection" and jeopardize key Western donor aid. Rather, he would be more likely to seek antitank and antiaircraft weaponry to offset Mali's superior armored and air capabilities.

Soviet Union

Although the USSR publicly welcomed Sankara's ouster of the pro-Western Ouedrago government, Moscow—probably doubtful about Sankara's reliability and leftist credentials—limited its relations with Burkina, providing only token economic aid. According to US Embassy reporting, Sankara remains disappointed that he has failed to draw more Soviet aid. Indeed, the Embassy reports that in 1984 Sankara was so enraged by the small amount of Soviet food relief—some 500 tons of grain—that he ordered its return to Moscow. That same year Sankara expelled the second-ranking diplomat from the 20-man Soviet Embassy for maintaining contacts with LIPAD, and the US Embassy reports that ties were strained further by Sankara's expulsion of LIPAD from the government in 1984.

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Moscow's current involvement is limited to token military training and educational assistance. The US Embassy reports that since July 1985 the Soviets have trained 11 Burkinan pilots in the USSR. Educational links are limited to 20 Soviet high school teachers in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso and some 60 Burkinabe attending school in the USSR. The Embassy reports that nearly half of the 147 Soviet scholarships available go unaccepted because most students who can go abroad prefer to attend universities in Western Europe. [redacted]

Although Moscow is unlikely to increase aid to Sankara, it probably will covertly assist LIPAD. [redacted]

[redacted] US Embassy reporting indicates that Soviet diplomats maintain some contact with LIPAD, and the Soviets may offer them financial assistance and political guidance. According to the US Embassy, Moscow still mistrusts Sankara's mercurial style and personal brand of populism, and fears any substantial Soviet presence would jeopardize its longstanding and profitable ties to neighboring Mali. [redacted]

Cuba

Burkina has not forged close ties to Cuba, but Havana's access to the intelligence apparatus may allow it some limited influence. For example, four Cuban advisers, who the US Embassy reports are attached to Sankara's intelligence service, may give Havana the opportunity to recruit antiregime officers and provide LIPAD with information on the regime's strengths and weaknesses. Following his coup, Sankara established diplomatic relations with Cuba and visited Havana. The Embassy reports that in April 1986 Burkina agreed to send some 600 students to Cuba, fulfilling a development agreement signed in 1984. According to US Embassy reporting, an unknown number of Cuban construction workers arrived in 1984 to help build the airport at Bobo-Dioulasso, but we have no evidence that they are still in the country. [redacted]

West African Concerns

According to a variety of US Embassy sources, most conservative West African regimes privately revile Sankara's populist rule and regard Burkina as a

potentially destabilizing regional force—a concern that would only be reinforced if Moscow or Libya gained a strong foothold in the country. As it is, leaders of these regimes also worry that their own junior officers may attempt to imitate Sankara, according to US Embassy reporting. [redacted]

[redacted] is training Ivorian dissidents. According to the US Embassy in Bamako, Mali privately alleges that Burkina is aiding its dissidents, although we have been unable to confirm its claim. [redacted]

Both the Ivorian and Togolese Governments could use their economic leverage against Sankara should they believe it necessary. Landlocked Burkina relies on a railroad through Ivory Coast and a highway through Togo to move virtually all its imports and exports, according to US Embassy reporting. Moreover, about one-third of Burkina's adult labor force—about 1 million—works in Ivory Coast. [redacted]

[redacted] The US Embassy reports that Burkina would not be able to find work for large numbers of returning citizens, who would probably blame Sankara for their plight. [redacted]

Moderating Influences

While Sankara regularly criticizes the West—presumably to demonstrate his nonaligned credentials—he wants to avoid jeopardizing vital Western aid, according to the US Embassy. In addition, both France and Algeria have continued to encourage Sankara to moderate his policies in exchange for their continuing support. [redacted]

France

Despite periodic strains in the relationship, Paris continues to aid the Sankara regime in order to play a moderating role and to protect substantial French

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interests in neighboring Ivory Coast, Niger, and Togo. During a state visit to Paris last February, Sankara pledged to pursue more balanced domestic and foreign policies. [redacted]

[redacted] Since 1983, Sankara has regularly lashed out at French "imperialism" in Africa and accused Paris of aiding Burkinan dissidents. [redacted]

The US Embassy in Paris reports that French officials are dismayed by Sankara's repressive tactics and unpredictable behavior, yet France remains Burkina's largest aid donor. Paris provided some \$55 million in economic aid in 1984 and in 1985 some \$43 million—about 40 percent of Burkina's budget. Moreover, France remains Burkina's largest trading partner, taking some 44 percent of its exports and providing 33 percent of its imports last year. French commercial investment in Burkina totals about \$5 million and some 4,000 French citizens reside in the country. The Embassy reports that Paris may demand payment of Burkina's debt of some \$155 million to France as leverage to influence Sankara toward more pragmatic thinking and moderate his regional policies. French officials pledge to end all financial aid, however, if Sankara allows his country to be used as a base for subversion of neighboring regimes. [redacted]

Algeria

In an effort to limit Libya's role in West Africa and to develop its own sphere of influence, Algiers provides Ouagadougou with some limited military and economic aid. [redacted]

[redacted] has donated artillery, nine armored cars, two helicopters, and a MIG-17, and has trained a small number of Burkinan pilots. The Embassy also reports that in 1985 Algiers provided Ouagadougou with some \$4 million in economic assistance as well as an unknown amount of oil. Algerian President Bendjedid is probably counseling Sankara to modify his radical stance, distance himself from Qadhafi, and seek greater cooperation with his neighbors, according to Embassy reporting. [redacted]

United States

The United States also has some aid ties to Burkina, according to US statistics. Bilateral aid was \$2 million last year, and will total about \$1 million for 1986.

In addition, the United States provides about one-third of Burkina's drought relief assistance—some 66,000 metric tons last year—and Sankara publicly praises US drought aid. We believe the limited market potential for US investors—in 1983, the last year of available data, private investment totaled less than \$3 million—and the possibility for continued political instability are likely to deter any significant increase in US private-sector trade and investment. [redacted]

Outlook and Implications for the United States

While Sankara's position appears secure for now, we believe his popularity will erode steadily over the next year while his domestic opponents continue to build their strength. In particular, we believe LIPAD—a relatively well-educated and disciplined group—has a good chance to cultivate support within military and civilian elite and better position itself to pressure Sankara or lobby for his ouster by a more radical and steadfast leader. Moreover, the revolution's lack of direction, Sankara's erratic behavior, and mounting restiveness within the public and military sectors may spur rivalries in the inner circle and possibly prompt one of Sankara's key advisers to launch a preemptive coup. Lingani, Zongo, and Compaore each command military units capable of carrying out a successful coup, in our judgment. [redacted]

Meanwhile, consistent with his carrot and stick method of ensuring the military's loyalty, Sankara may turn to Libya for equipment and supplies to halt grumbling over the poor state of Burkinan military capabilities. Although Burkina's relations with Libya are strained, Sankara is an opportunist and probably would choose a "low cost" source of military aid. In return for Libyan assistance, we judge Sankara would be willing to permit Libya quietly to channel some assistance through Burkina to dissidents attempting to undermine neighboring states. We also believe, however, that Tripoli would use its limited military ties to work behind the scenes to cultivate particular officers, possibly in the belief that over time it can install a more compliant leader. [redacted]

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In the event Lingani, Zongo, or Compaore seized power, a new government would probably look to Libya or possibly the Soviet Union for political support and for military equipment and training to bolster their security apparatus. We note, however, that all three appear to lack the leadership skills necessary to maintain the loyalty of the military and would be hard pressed to fend off pressures from LIPAD to take a major role in government. Any new leadership would also have serious difficulty meeting public expectations for improved living standards and would probably have to contend with outbreaks of unrest, possibly led by the powerful trade unions.

[REDACTED]

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Regardless of who rules Burkina, the country's desperate need for financial assistance will provide a source of leverage for France and the West. The risk, however, is that the Soviets and Libyans will provide enough up-front money to move Ouagadougou down a path unacceptable to Western donors. Alternatively, Moscow and Tripoli could choose to mask their ties to any new leadership and quietly develop Burkina as a regional base while encouraging the government to take the steps needed to avoid jeopardizing Western aid. [REDACTED]

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