



CLIMATE VANGUARD

Who is Ibrahim Traoré?

Image: X, @CapitaineIb226.

In September 2022, a popular coup made Captain Ibrahim Traoré the interim President of Burkina Faso.

Under his leadership, Burkina Faso expelled the French military, took back control of gold production, kick-started sovereign industrialisation, and perhaps most importantly, co-created an anti-imperialist confederation with Mali and Niger known as the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

Traoré represents a reinvigorated struggle for sovereignty against the forces of neo-colonialism →



Neo-Colonialism in the Sahel

Countries of the Sahel won their independence from France in 1960. But this was little more than a political formality.

Sahel countries remain subordinated to French capital through their reliance on the French-African Community (CFA) Franc – a currency controlled by the French treasury. The creation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 deepened economic integration under the CFA Franc and facilitated French-backed military interventions.



The imperialist destabilisation of the Sahel has worsened since 2011, in large part due to NATO's invasion of Libya and assassination of leader Muammar al-Gaddafi.



Under Gaddafi, Libya was an independent, developmentalist country with the highest UN Human Development Index ranking on the African continent. NATO destroyed this project, turning Libya into a failed state and staging ground for Al-Qaeda affiliated groups. This contributed to a terrorist insurgency across the Sahel, including in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.

It is in this context that we must analyse the rise of Ibrahim Traoré →

The Rise of Ibrahim Traoré

Ibrahim Traoré was born in the small Burkinabé town of Bondokuy. In 2006, he enrolled at the University of Ouagadougou, where he studied geology and participated in the Marxist National Association of Students of Burkina Faso (ANEB).

After graduating with honours, he joined the army in 2009. Traoré rose rapidly through the ranks, becoming a lieutenant in 2014 and captain in 2020. He was active in numerous counter-insurgency operations in Mali, and later on, in Burkina Faso.

Source: Jones, MRonline (2025).

Image: X, @CapitaineIb226.



Traoré began to lose faith in the government after a terrorist attack in 2021 left 49 police officers and 4 civilians dead. He supported the ensuing coup in January 2022, which made his military colleague Paul-Henri Sandaoga Damiba the interim President.



After 9 months in power and little progress against the terrorist insurgency, which controlled 40% of Burkina Faso's territory, Traoré mounted a coup against Damiba, assuming the role of interim President.



Sovereign Development

Traoré's first move in power was to reject the presidential salary, retaining the smaller commander salary. He followed this up with cutting government minister pay by 30% and increasing civil servants wages by 50%. This set the tone for Traoré's focus on sovereign development, which has included:

Sources: Jones, MRonline (2025);
Eid, Tricontinental (2024);
Garrison, MRonline (2025)
Image: X, @Capitainelb226.

- ↪ **Controlling Key Resources:** Through a combination of mine nationalisations, export permit restrictions, and state royalty increases, Burkina Faso has asserted greater control over its immense gold reserves. This includes the construction of Burkina Faso's first-ever gold refinery, which will stem the flow of raw gold to Europe.
- ↪ **Kickstarting Industry:** An array of industrial projects have been completed, including a pharmaceutical factory specialising in generic drug production, food processing facilities for tomatoes, and a farm equipment distribution programme (e.g. tractors, tillers, and motor pumps).
- ↪ **Building Essential Infrastructure:** Gravel roads are being paved, new roads are under construction, and flagship programmes are being revitalised, such as the construction of a "state-of-the-art" Ouagadougou-Donsin Airport and the Ouagadougou-Abidjan high-speed railway link.

Alliance of the Sahel States

Traoré has established a new political architecture to protect and advance Burkina Faso's developmental gains.

After expelling the French military and deepening cooperation with Russia, Traoré signed the 2023 Liptako-Gourma Accord together with Malian interim President Assimi Goïta and Nigerien President Abdourahamane Tchiani.

This brought together the three popular coups of the Sahel – Mali (2021), Burkina Faso (2022), Niger (2023) – into the political bloc known as the AES.

At the 2024 inaugural summit in Niamey, Niger, AES members deepened their integration by forming a confederation and creating joint political-economic mechanisms, including a potential new currency called “the Sahel.”



Counter-Revolution

On April 22nd, 2025, the Burkinabé Security Minister Mahamadou Sana announced that security forces had foiled a “major plot” to assassinate Traoré. News of the assassination attempt triggered global protests in support of Traoré, including in Western capitals like London. In response to the popular upsurge, Traoré said:

“We will never bend our backs in the face of adversity; we will stand firm until our peoples are truly emancipated. With you, we are certain that victory over the forces of evil is at hand. Together, in solidarity, we will defeat imperialism and neo-colonialism for a free, dignified and sovereign Africa.”



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Bissau-Guinean and Cape Verdean revolutionary Amílcar Cabral taught us that **“the objective of national liberation is to regain the inalienable right of every people to have its own history.”** The Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdoulaye Diop, echoed this sentiment in an address to European governments last year, stating:

*“With the Alliance of Sahel States, there is a new geopolitical reality. Whether you like it or not, it doesn't matter...**The fate of our countries will not be decided in Brussels, Paris, Washington, or London; it will be decided in Bamako, Ouagadougou, Niamey.**”*

The conditions are different, but the motive force of today's anti-imperialist struggles remains the same: collective liberation.