

The relationship between Russia and Africa from the Cold War to 2021 *

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Abstract: *Russia and Africa have had a multifaceted relationship since the post-Cold War years. The relationship between Russia and African countries is reflected in many fields, such as economics, politics, diplomacy, and defense. Cooperation between Russia and African countries demonstrates competitive equality and mutual benefit. However, Russia is facing stiff competition with other countries on the continent. This article will analyze the basic features of the relationship between Russia and Africa in all fields, including economy, politics, diplomacy, and national security. Finally, the article also gives conclusions and personal evaluations about this relationship.*

Keywords—Russia, Africa, relations, economics, politics

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1991 the Soviet Union disintegrated, and Russia inherited the Soviet Union. Africa does not occupy the strategic priority of the Soviet heir. But since the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, when Western sanctions and embargoes surrounded Russia, Russia has sought to recover what was "forgotten" in Africa. Developing and consolidating mutually beneficial relations with African countries is a priority in Russia's foreign policy. Determining the route most suitable for the successful growth of a bilateral relationship between Russia and South Africa is crucial. But to do that, it is essential first to comprehend the background and nature of relations between South Africa and Russia. This relationship includes determining the primary communication channels between the two nations and the opportunities and obstacles that could improve their mutually beneficial relationship. With the visits of President Mandela in April 1999 and Deputy President Thabo Mbeki in November 1998, the two countries bilateral relations entered a new phase. The Declaration on Principles of Friendly Relations and Partnership between Russia and South Africa was signed by Mandela during his visit.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Regular high-level visits to African countries by Presidents Putin and Medvedev (in 2006 and 2009, respectively), as well as diplomatic and economic engagement by senior Russian officials and the entry of a dozen or so mega-industrial companies into specific African states, punctuated the continent's growing significance in Russia's foreign policy matrix. Dmitry Medvedev, the president of Russia, spoke about "Russia-Africa traditional friendly relations" while on

safari in Africa. He predicted a "new vitality in Russia-Africa traditional friendly relations," but he also noted that "Russia was almost too late in engaging Africa [1].

Given Africa's immense potential, there is undoubtedly more work to be done, especially in light of the fact that 80 percent of Africa's exports to Russia go to only a small group of countries: Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and South Africa.

According to Arkhangelskaya & Shubin, (2013), Russia is in an excellent position to increase its influence in Africa. Along with a good reputation in Africa and a history of completing significant projects, Russian companies also employ local African workers in these regions and observe local laws and customs, giving African nations the freedom to set their policies regarding implementing economic projects. Overall, this strategy has helped Russia's reputation in Africa. The Association of South East Asian Nations, BRICS, and the UN and its Specialized Agencies are just a few of the new and current multilateral organizations with which African leaders are looking to establish ties. They also see Russia as a partner or a connection in this process (ASEAN)[2].

[3], anchored in both theory and empirical research, shed light on the rise of nations like Turkey, South Korea, and Indonesia and how they interact with Africa. To illustrate the dynamic and complicated nature of these links and their position within the global capitalist order, top researchers provide case studies from the BRICS and beyond. Additionally, they offer fresh theoretical perspectives and theorize the Spatio-temporal dynamics underlying accumulation processes in the African space. Despite their purported anti-imperialism, these emergent nations have

become instruments of ongoing inequitable growth. Students and academics interested in international relations, political science, development studies, area studies, geography, and economics may find this creatively edited anthology appealing[4].

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AFRICA

3.1 ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Relations between Russia and Africa in the area of natural resources are growing. Although it is suitable for Russia to mine minerals and extract oil from Africa, these activities are not as critical for China and India, whose economies are expanding quickly. Russia has been left with little supply of vital minerals for its economy after the fall of the Soviet Union. There are now numerous mineral deposits outside of its bounds.

A growing number of minerals are in short supply in Russia and must be imported, including manganese (nearly 100%), chrome (80%), and bauxite (60%)! Guinea, one of the world's top producers of bauxites, is Russia's primary bauxite supplier. Russian mining investments in Africa have increased because extracting and transporting minerals from Africa is less expensive than developing deposits in Siberia and the Far East [5].

However, the debate over natural resources also has another perspective: Approximately 60% of the world's biogenetic resources, including minerals and fresh water, are either in Russia or Africa. Due to recent attempts to label these resources "an international asset," both parties stand to gain from cooperating to protect their right to manage this wealth.

Russia has strengths in science and technology and experience in modernizing energy, transportation, and communication infrastructure. This relationship is a strength for Russia to cooperate with African partners.

During his two decades in power, President Putin only visited South Africa once. Still, now with the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit, a strategic step is increasingly clear to create favorable conditions for developing economic-trade relations through diversification of forms and fields of bilateral cooperation [6].

The Russia-Africa Economic Forum in Sochi in October 2019, at the same time as the Russia-Africa Summit, aims to create trade and investment opportunities and help develop bilateral economic relations. Russia and African countries have signed a number of cooperation agreements in the fields of economy, energy, nuclear, information technology, and transportation. Weapons, energy, and infrastructure are the

factors contributing to the strengthening of bilateral economic ties. In the case of significant export of Russia to Africa, other items such as food, agricultural materials, machinery, equipment, and means of transport are also focused on exporting to Africa. Russia imports citrus fruits, manganese ore, cocoa, vegetables, clothes, shoes, tea, coffee, flowers, spices, fish, seafood and cashew nuts from Africa.

Africa imports machinery, cars, and grain from Russia. This trend continues, and Russia will increase its share in total trade with Africa in the coming time. Russia wants cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union and Africa. Russia's goal is to help African countries solve existing problems on their own, contributing to strengthening their sovereignty and independence.

Bilateral trade relations are growing and diversifying. Trade between Russia and Africa has increased from 760 million USD (1993) to more than 20 billion USD (2018), equal to half of the France-Africa trade turnover and 1/10 of the trade turnover. China - Africa, of which Russia exports 17.5 billion USD and imports 2.9 billion USD from Africa. From January 2019 to August 2019, Russia exported \$7.1 billion and imported \$1.8 billion in goods from Africa.

Russia invested about 47 billion USD in Angola, Ghana, Guinea, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Congo, Nigeria, and South Africa. Most of them are investment projects on nuclear energy (worth 30 billion USD). In addition, in 2018, Lukoil Oil Corporation purchased 25% of the Republic of Congo's Marine XII gas project worth \$800 million. Russia will implement many projects worth billions of dollars in Africa in the next five years [7].

In addition to promoting trade and investment relations with Africa, Russia also encourages cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union (Eurasian Economic Union, EAEU, consisting of Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) and the Trade Agreement African Continental Free Trade (AfCFTA).

Russia, together with the international community, provides comprehensive support to Africa, cuts debt for Africa, and implements a debt conversion program. At the end of the twentieth century, Russia erased 20 billion USD of debt from African countries borrowed from the Soviet Union - Soviet era. Russia is currently handling the remaining debts of African countries, applying a debt conversion program to Madagascar, Mozambique, and Tanzania. Putin said that all loans Russia gives to African countries are made according to market principles, such as a \$25 billion loan from Egypt to build the El Dabaa nuclear power plant [8].

Russia supports Africa in combating infectious diseases, such as Ebola and viral fever, and disaster relief with the international community. Russia contributes to Africa through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Food Program WFP, and humanitarian assistance to African countries, such as aid to countries devastated by Cyclone Idai in April 2019. Russia sends humanitarian goods to Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Mozambique, such as tents, blankets, food, etc., and supports poverty alleviation in Africa [9].

3.2. POLITICS RELATIONS

The Soviet Union's ambitious Africa policy ended with the closure of nine embassies and four consulates on African soil. Twenty-seven years later, Russia again organized The first Russia-Africa summit in Sochi (Russia), with 40 African heads of state far exceeding the number of countries with which the former Soviet Union had traditional relations. In recent times, dozens of African leaders have visited and sought to boost ties with Russia [10].

Unlike some Western countries that use pressure and threats to regain influence and dominance in the former colony, Russia implements a policy of equal cooperation and competition with African countries; it does not require political or other "special" conditions. It did not impose Russia's position, respecting the principle of African countries that "African problems must be solved by Africa," supporting the legitimate desire of African countries to implement a policy of independence and self-reliance; protect common interests with African partners.

Russia strengthens ties with Africa through "the beginning of the era of Russia-Africa cooperation." Since 2010, Russia has expanded its sphere of interest in Africa beyond its former sphere of influence. The two sides conducted an active political dialogue and developed inter-parliamentary relations.

After winning the Syrian conflict, Russia wants to establish its status as a world power by organizing the Russia-Africa Summit with the theme "For Peace, Security, and Development." for two days from October 23-24, 2019. Some observers commented that this forum marked a turning point for Russia and was a testament to Russia's desire to develop a multifaceted partnership between Russia and other African countries in all areas. Russia and African countries' political views and economic development policies share many similarities, facilitating constructive interaction within the United Nations and other international structures.

Russia and African countries cooperate in education, defense, security, and conflict resolution. Russia promotes cooperation with African countries in the fight against terrorism and other security threats. Russia is present throughout the Middle East, from North Africa to the Gulf of Persia, through high-profile guests, weapons, military advisers, soldiers, and agreements to build nuclear power plants. Russia got involved in the region when the US withdrew its troops from Syria. Russia is emerging as a significant power broker in the area after its absence for a quarter of a century following the Cold War.

In the fall of 2015, Russia sent troops to Syria, quickly changing the situation. Saving the Syrian regime is not only necessary for Russia to maintain its foothold in the Middle East and North Africa but also an opportunity to address domestic security concerns about the indirect effects of the war in Syria. It is reported that some opposition organizations in Syria have accepted hundreds, possibly thousands, of Russian fighters into their ranks. Russia is located near the Middle East, and its borders are easily penetrated, so Russia should fight terrorists in Syria actively rather than wait for "them to come knocking." operation in Syria is successful. Russia did not suffer much loss of life of soldiers or property. On the contrary, this intervention restored Russia's prominent position, demonstrated the strength of the Russian military, and was an opportunity to test new weapons. Moreover, this victory made the African friends understand that Russia doesn't give up but also helps comrades.

Military-technical cooperation between Russia and African countries has developed enormously. Besides maintaining relations with traditional partners such as Ethiopia or Angola, Russia also expands connections to countries such as the Central African Republic or other African countries. Russia recently signed a military cooperation agreement with the Central African Republic, which has long been ravaged by civil war. Accordingly, Russian military advisers officially work in the capital, Bangui. It is also reported that representatives of the Russian private military company Wagner are working in the Central African Republic to ensure the personal security of the host president Faustin-Archange Touadéra. However, this is still the case where there is a lot of French influence. Russian "military advisers" also appear in Libya, Mozambique, Madagascar, and Sudan (Eugene Rumer, 2019).

Russia strengthens exchanges with specialized forces of African countries to combat terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, money laundering, illegal immigration, and

piracy; military training; and organization of defense and security forums.

From 2017 to now, Russia signed 20 military cooperation agreements, compared with seven agreements of the same type between 2010 and 2017 with African countries. Russia uses military cooperation agreements for mining rights for gold, diamonds, and other minerals. Russia is the region's largest arms exporter, especially Egypt and Algeria. In Angola, Russia has a foot in diamond mining. Russia has a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with Madagascar (considered a sister country in the Soviet-Soviet era) and Ethiopia. In addition, Russia has two military and technical cooperation agreements with Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since 2009, Russian weapons have been sent to eighteen African countries, mainly Angola, Nigeria, and Sudan. Up to now, Russia has become the leading supplier of weapons to sub-Saharan African countries (accounting for 28%), ahead of China (24%) and Ukraine (8.3%). Russia is also the largest arms supplier (49%) to the African countries of the Maghreb region, ahead of the US (15%) and China (10%). (Benoît Vitkine et Cyril Bensimon, 2018).

4. SOME DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

China's penetration into Africa has continued to grow since the early 2000s, both bilaterally and multilaterally, rising to become Africa's leading trade and investment partner. China is rapidly expanding its financial and political influence across Africa. Much of what China does in Africa is within the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), an event held every three years since the early 2000s and attended by foreign countries leaders of nearly every African nation and leader of China. Since the mid-2000s, no FOCAC summit has occurred without announcing new funding from China for African countries. This support has grown from \$5 billion (2006) to \$40 billion (2015). At the FOCAC conference (September 2018) in Beijing, Chinese leader Xi Jinping announced a package of \$60 billion in new financing (of which \$50 billion comes from Chinese development organizations and another \$10 billion from private companies). For many years, China has been Africa's number one trading partner. As Western businesses gradually leave Africa, China also becomes a prominent investor. Over the past five years, Chinese investment in Africa has increased by \$24 billion, investment from the United States and the United Kingdom has remained virtually unchanged, and

French investment has fallen by \$3 billion. However, China is only the fourth largest investor in Africa, with \$40 billion (in 2016), after the US (\$57 billion), the UK (\$55 billion), and France (\$49 billion)[11].

China has increased its military presence in Africa in recent years along with economic penetration. In 2017, China's first overseas military base was established in Djibouti.

Suppose Russia is the main exporter of weapons to Africa. In that case, China is one of the most prominent investors and trading partners and is gradually getting involved in resolving local conflicts and maintaining peace and stability in Africa. The geopolitical relationship and the relatively high level of trust between Russia and China give the impression that the two countries are working together in Africa. But, there is no proof that Russia cannot compete with China in terms of influence in Africa. However, China will have to deal with the domestic problems of African countries and the dual influence of Russia (such as selling weapons to different parties in the conflict in the same region).

Russia cannot yet compete with China or the West because Russia is not the Soviet Union and Russia lacks resources. At the same time, Russia's influence in Africa has only begun to appear in recent years.

Africa is increasingly seen as a continent with many opportunities, possessing rich resources and promising economies, increasing demand for infrastructure construction, rapid population growth, and growing consumer demand. Africa is also facing the context of having to expand the domestic market, consuming more, leading to competition between significant countries to gain benefits.

Russia participates in the civilized competition and within the framework of the law, bringing resources and technology to Africa. Russia is also committed to protecting the common economic interests of the two sides against unilateral sanctions. Russia does not ally with one side to oppose the other and opposes the geopolitical "game" in Africa. From an economic point of view, Russia is not a significant partner of African countries because Russia's trade with countries in sub-Saharan Africa stands at \$3 billion. In comparison, US trade - Africa (\$27 billion) or China - Africa (\$56 billion) is many times bigger. After a twenty-five-year absence from the African continent, Russia is trying to exploit the legacy of its Soviet past. It uses the opportunities to strengthen economic ties, investment, trade, arms sales, and military advisors to regions in the continent.

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