



Russia's Africa Policy

Who Benefits, How and Why

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Even now, too few Western analysts and officials take Russia's interventions and policies in Africa sufficiently seriously. Apart from journalistic accounts, the few existing expert studies generally argue that Moscow is projecting diverse forms of power into Africa mainly for economic reasons, e.g., circumvention, sanctions, profits from trade and lucrative mining and energy contracts that benefit Putin's entourage and state corporations. These benefits also include outlets for laundering oligarchs' money before returning it to Europe. Since most of Russia's investments either appear to be money-laundering ventures or arms and energy sales (including nuclear energy), or the provision of security services, their benefits largely flow to the state sector and state corporations — Rostekhnologii, Rosatom, Rosneft, Gazprom — or to oligarchs who control private security forces like Yevgeny Prigozhin. (Kalika, 2019). Indeed, one possible purpose for the October 2019 Russo-Africa summit in Sochi may have been to expand trade and investment ties to Russia's private sector, which has evidently been largely absent from Afro-Russian economic ties.

Economic gains undoubtedly are equally important to African and Russian elites in their mutual relationship. (Kester Kenn Klomeagh, 2019). Yet these studies also

argue that Moscow has no real strategy for Africa, and its prospects are limited at best to a few corrupt and badly governed states. (Stronski, 2019; Kalika, 2019) But trade and investment opportunities are critical to Russia's Africa policy largely because they introduce Russia to African elites and "audiences," thereby creating lasting relationships and policy linkages with them. In other words, economic gains generally serve as entrees for political and military influence, leading to the attainment of Russia's political and strategic objectives. Indeed, Russia has signed 19 military agreements with Africa since 2014 (The Economist, March 9, 2019). And at Sochi, Putin boasted that Russia had now concluded 30 military accords with African states. (Russian Leader Boasts, 2019) Moreover, as that summit showed, Africa's importance to Russia is rising, especially as it is viewed as a backdoor to Europe from which Moscow may think it can gain leverage on European energy supplies and security, or that it can use its African presence to pressure countries like France (Marten, 2019).

Given Africa's ascending significance for Russia, we must ask what concrete gains Russia and African countries expect from Russia's heightened African presence and, second, what impact that presence has in Africa. Third, we can inquire about the degree of success that Russia has attained in its quest for lasting influence across Africa. Beyond these issues we can also ask whether Russia can provide genuine solutions to Africa's post-colonial problems. What does Russia's revived interest and presence in Africa mean for emerging African countries? What are the prospects, challenges and lessons of Russia's ascension for Africa? How can African countries benefit from the growing social, political, cultural and economic ties with Russia? How does Russia benefit from social, political and economic collaboration, partnerships and investments into African economies?

This essay duly argues that Russia's participation in the new scramble for Africa is increasingly important to Moscow's overall global national security strategy, e.g., fundamentally a political, even strategic, quest. Russia ultimately aims in Africa to create a bloc of pro-Russian states over which it has lasting political-economic, and even military leverage, e.g., a sphere of influence. In turn, this regional transformation will then effectuate a lasting change in the global strategic order. Therefore, Russia's motives are primarily strategic, even if they encompass economic gains. Economic gains, despite their importance, function ultimately to enhance Russia's strategic profile in Africa and the creation of this sphere of influence. Consequently, Russian policies employ all the instruments of power in Moscow's portfolio, including military, to attain lasting strategic and political gains. Neither is this a new Russian policy. Instead, it was already emerging by 2014-15. (Pham, 2014) Not surprisingly, therefore, Russian analysts view Russia as a balancing power in Africa — and even Asia — between the rival poles of the West (U.S. and the European Union) and Asia. (Korybko, 2018) Neither is it

surprising that Russia is sending “political technologists” to many African states, e.g., Libya and Nigeria, to rig local elections and install pro-Russian governments. (Al-Atrush, Arkhipov, Meyer, 2019; Newdawnngr, 2018; Harding, Burke, 2019)

Russia has sent “political technologists” to at least 20 African countries. (Goble, 2019). That is hardly a limited operation. The term “political technology” — prevalent across the former Soviet space — might perhaps be best described as a “euphemism for what is by now a highly developed industry of political manipulation.” (Goble, 2019) Thus, it is also targeting African voters with disinformation campaigns as in the U.S. and Europe. (Kazeem, 2019) Election rigging may be commonplace in Africa. (Kollie, 2016); Russia has sought to influence elections in South Africa, Mozambique and across Africa. (Documents, 2019; VOA, 2019) In Nigeria, Russian hackers allegedly conspired with the People’s Democratic Party and its candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, to rig the presidential elections. Similarly, Russian paramilitary organization Wagner Group private military fighters sent to Libya are participating in election rigging along with other Russian elements in Madagascar. In Madagascar, they have sought to co-opt candidates who would then drop out, allowing Russia’s favored candidate to win. In Libya their operatives have discussed rigging elections on behalf of General Khalifa Haftar, Moscow’s chosen candidate against the present Libyan government. Meanwhile in South Africa, Russian operatives, created a think tank to act as a vehicle to tarnish Mmusi Maimane, the DA leader, and Julius Malema, the populist leader of the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters.

The team drew up documents, obtained by the investigators, that listed its proposed tactics, ranging from “generating and disseminating video content” and “coordinating with a loyal pool of journalists” to finding ways “to discredit” the opposition. (Russia Planned, 2019; Allen, 2019; Dunn, 2019; Newdawnngr, 2018; Weiss, Vaux, 2018; Al-Atrush, Arkhipov, Meyer, 2019) Russia’s pervasive election-rigging activities in Africa replicate its actions in Europe and the U.S. and highlight its unremitting global political warfare against European and Western solidarity within and among states, efforts designed to obstruct African regional cooperation, and actions taken to create a pro-Russian bloc across Africa by all available means. Election rigging also benefits African elites who employ this approach to enhance their own power. Therefore, Russia’s election-rigging activities promote a shared interest with African elites sympathetic to Russia’s approach, and who duly anticipate mutually rewarding policy outcomes. Thus, Russia and its “state agents” intervene on behalf of ruling parties in South Africa, insurgents in Libya, or on behalf of candidates who can best advance Moscow’s interests as in Mozambique, Madagascar and Nigeria. The only criterion of its intervention in elections is inserting pro-Russian leadership.

These policies and tactics clearly affect African governance. Such actions retard democratization and enhance corruption and anti-democratic policies. They create the basis for internal wars within afflicted states that possess the likelihood of subsequently engulfing neighboring countries or becoming international crises requiring even greater foreign intervention. Thus, Russia's tactics can easily lead to further civil and military strife within and among African states that undermine their sovereignty, territorial integrity and governability, while also generating strong pressures for foreign intervention.

Alternatively, these processes often fulfill Russia's ambitions by creating opportunities for acquiring leverage, untraceable wealth and foreign bases in Africa. In Sudan, Omar Bashir offered Russia a base in return for support against his opponents. (Blank in Blank, Karasik, 2017) This fell through, but Moscow is still trying. Somaliland and Eritrea have, however, offered Moscow bases that it now uses. Moreover, there is no doubt that Russia seeks bases in Alexandria and Egypt in general, Libya, Algeria and probably across sub-Saharan Africa. (Blank, in Blank, Karasik, 2017) Moscow's continuing presence in the Central African Republic (CAR) may originate in a United Nations mandate, but Russia is there to stay and behaves as if the CAR is its protectorate. (Pabandji, 2017) Thus, Moscow is selling weapons, dispatching advisors (probably interspersed with members of the Wagner Group) to train the CAR army.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) provides the following explanation for Russian soldiers' and "civilian instructors" presence in CAR:

"Russia's assistance is carried out as part of the common efforts of the international community to strengthen the national security units of the CAR, to transfer full responsibility for maintaining security and law and order throughout its territory to the local authority and, ultimately, to normalize the situation and to provide a lasting solution to the drawn-out internal armed conflict."

However, the Russian aid is unlikely to be entirely charitable. The same MFA statement mentions "mutually beneficial development of Central African natural resources," including "prospecting mining exploration concessions." A French international relations expert, Didier Francois, told Europe the Russian "instructors" deployed close to mineral deposits, such as gold, diamonds and uranium. Didier explains this by actions of "oligarchs close to the Putin clan," and suggests Russia is "killing two birds with one stone," acting for both economic interests and a new strategy of presence in Eastern and Central Africa. "Oligarchs close to Putin" could mean Yevgeny Prigozhin, the man who allegedly runs the Wagner Group and has entered a contract with Syrian authorities to "liberate"

gas fields in exchange for a share in production, and he could hope for similar contracts in the CAR. (Russian Presence, 2019)

Neither do Russian writers shrink from stating Moscow's expansive goals. For example, Andrew Korybko writes"

"Russia's dispatch of specialists to the Congo Republic (Congo-Brazzaville) in order to maintain military equipment completes Moscow's plan of creating a corridor of influence across the continent from the Sudanese Red Sea coast to the Congolese Atlantic one via the Central African Republic, which therefore greatly increases the chances that it'll ultimately succeed with its 21st-century grand strategy of becoming the supreme Afro-Eurasian "balancing" force in the New Cold War." (Korybko, May 27, 2019)

Since "power-projection activities are an input into the world order," Russian force deployments into Africa and economic-political actions to gain access, influence and power there represent competitive and profound attempts to engender a long-term restructuring of Africa's strategic order (Houweling, 2004) by creating a Russian sphere of influence. Certainly, Moscow appears to be on the verge of obtaining a base in the CAR, supposedly at the request of its government. (Vandiver, 2019; Roth, 2019) One could argue that Russia is merely emulating the great powers' previous practice. But Russia is replicating the neocolonialist pattern we see in the CAR wherever it has become a dominant partner, e.g., in Ukraine where it confiscated Ukraine's energy platforms immediately upon seizing Crimea, or by its efforts to impose economic subordination upon Central Asian and other former Soviet states. (Spechler, Spechler, 2019) Whatever Western firms and governments have done in the past, this kind of exploitation is neither feasible nor desirable for them.

Therefore, we cannot abstract Russia's accomplishments from its overall objectives here or from the enhanced capabilities it has now gained by utilizing a multidimensional strategy to secure access across Africa. Russia's deals and achievements confirm that for Russia, if not other major actors, "Geopolitical power is less about the projection of military prowess and more about access and control of resources and infrastructure." (Johnson, Derrick, 2012) And that access, whether attained through election rigging or other Russian tactics and strategies, is fundamentally inimical to African elites' long-standing efforts to resolve African problems by themselves.

We can further argue that Russia's African policies also help build a coalition of authoritarian states to support Moscow in regional and international forums. Russia's African policies also exemplify:

“The ability of external factors in general, and international organizations created by authoritarian ‘gravity poles’ in particular, to reinforce the authoritarian regime trajectories of other states – that is, intentionally or unintentionally to promote the spread of authoritarian rule.” (Libman, Obydenova, 2018, p. 1037)

Thus, Russia’s African policies also abet the creation of regional and continental blocs or organizations whose purpose is to obstruct African democracy and Western presence. The prime example of this is the BRICS organization (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). These institutions reinforce great-power interests against the Western-led international order and provide resources for ideological or geopolitical regional and great-power contestation. Thus, they link ideological conflicts over democratic governance to geostrategic rivalries by espousing rhetoric of multipolarity to erode Western dominance of multilateral economic and financial institutions and to attack the primacy of the dollar. Insofar as BRICS is essentially a Russian initiative and Russia has become a much more vociferous critic of Western and American hegemony, it stands to reason that it would use this institution both rhetorically and pragmatically even more as its estrangement from Washington and the West grows. (Steunkel, 2015) Indeed, in this way BRICS closely resembles an emerging global Russian policy template, “A multipolar anchor pursuing independent integrational projects that contravene the existing unipolar order ...” (Belyanina, 2016)

Russia thereby replicates one of the Cold War’s distinguishing hallmarks. Globalizing Russia’s long-standing war against Western ideological and strategic encroachment restores (at least to Russian elites) the perception of Russia as a great global power, a constitutive pole of the multipolar order. But this strategy also represents Moscow’s considered insight regarding the only way it can retain power at home. (Lungu, 2015–2016, p. 5) Russia-preferred ideological and geostrategic outcomes in Africa underscore Africa’s growing importance to Russia as an opportunity for displaying its multidimensional capabilities at the impending summit and beyond.

Accompanying Russia’s recovery of nerve and status is its theory of contemporary international relations revolving around the concept of multipolarity. Multipolarity means many things in Russian political literature, but it connotes certain agreed-upon phenomena and trends. First, Russia is a global great power and therefore entitled to enjoy that status. In Africa, Russia must therefore be present in a highly visible, publicly acknowledged and significant way. Second, multipolarity and Russian foreign policies represent a reaction against and counter to America’s unremitting but increasingly unsuccessful and counterproductive effort to establish its universal hegemony. Consequently other poles — China, Africa

and other regional security organizations — are challenging the U.S. globally, thereby asserting themselves and welcoming Russian assistance, along with the restoration of Russia’s traditional, e.g., Cold War, role abroad. While Western governments portray Russian policy as revisionism, Moscow views it instead as “the restoration of historical justice,” part of which entails playing a major role across Africa. (Kokshin, 2019) Thus, Russia’s growing influence across Africa appears in investments in mining and energy projects, arms sales, agreements to preserve governments against insurgents, e.g., deploying private military forces (mercenaries to some) and training forces to support local governments or insurgents, as the case may be. We find numerous signs of such deployments in Libya and the Central African Republic. (Kokshin, 2019; Harding, Burke, 2019; Dunn, 2018)

Although these deployments of private military forces, advisors and/or Spetsnaz forces remain small — in the hundreds — there is no authoritative account of just how many private military forces like Wagner or official Russian military personnel have been deployed to Libya, Mozambique, Central African Republic and Madagascar. But these deployments, taken together, suggest the implementation of a new Russian approach to Third World conflict. In this shift, Moscow is essentially creating a global expeditionary force based on small but integrated land, air and air naval forces, leveraging private military forces — either insurgents or regular forces in the country — and paramilitaries as in Syria to effectuate pro-Russian political change and resist supposedly Western-organized “color revolutions.” (Blank, 2019; Tucker, 2019) Essentially, Moscow is now developing in its “African laboratory” techniques first used in Syria to suppress what it perceives as “color revolutions” against its interests throughout the Third World and/or Europe or to launch its own uprisings on behalf of pro-Russian forces and leaders. In this “laboratory,” it is developing a new formula for global Russian and pro-Russian expeditionary forces that blends both Russian and indigenous, regular, private and irregular forces that are integrated by Russian command and control centers. (Blank, 2019; Tucker, 2019).

These developments coincide with the use of the aforementioned political technologists to influence political outcomes, imparting a creative and innovative aspect to Moscow’s military-political-economic quest for influence in Africa. So, while Russia gains political support and a lasting political obligation, these African political elements gain power and a reliable (and presumably grateful) foreign partner. Africa’s rising importance and Russia’s return to the world stage manifest the turn toward multipolarity as defined by them, according to Russian spokesmen. And to the extent that Russia partners with individual African states and African regional organizations, it advances African states’ standing in world affairs (both individually and collectively), strengthens Russia’s standing as

a balancer between them and other regional “poles,” and weakens America’s perceived ability to “dictate” policies to Africa. Whereas Africa benefits by gaining tangible and intangible resources for development and self-assertion, either by individual states or by regional entities, Russia gains influence, status, wealth and power; asserts itself against the U.S. (and much less overtly China, whose influence threatened to eclipse that of Russia); and weakens the U.S.-led West. Thus, multipolarity — as an operating concept of world politics — masks what is essentially a continuing bipolarity vis-à-vis the West and a zero-sum approach to competition in the Third World. (Kortunov, 2019)

The assertion of multipolarity is closely tied to the effort to foster foreign multilateral organizations that are vulnerable to Russian interests, corruption and pressure (Belyanina, 2016; Stuenkel, 2015). Indeed, we have seen this pattern at work in Latin America. (Blank, Kim, 2015; Russian Ministry of Foreign Relations of the Russian Federation, 2014). Russian policy in Africa aims to achieve similar goals, namely, forcing the U.S. to recognize Russia as a legitimate global player that must be reckoned with in international affairs pertaining to either Latin America or Africa. Such positioning excludes Western military power from intervening in both regions and curtails such interventions through a Russian and regional veto expressed through the U.N. and regional security institutions like the African Union. (Taylor, 2008) Moscow seeks to instrumentalize Russia’s presence in Africa as in Latin America to create a pro-Russian bloc, gain leverage on regional security organizations and exclude the West from these regions while securing a free hand for itself. These intentions obviously connect to the aforementioned goals of a sphere of influence and extension of authoritarian regional institutions with Russian influence or even membership.

The Sochi summit reflected Africa’s rising importance to Moscow. It was the first in a series of inter-ministerial and inter-governmental conclaves based on an already robust schedule of regular high-level Russo-African interactions. Such programs of action are not minor events for Russian policymakers, even if Africa does not enjoy the standing attached to ties with America, Europe, China and the Middle East. Thus, the Sochi summit, associated and future meetings demonstrate Africa’s rising strategic significance to Moscow and will create a launching pad for numerous future economic-political initiatives for mutual gain.

Moreover, Russia’s successful intervention in the Middle East has stimulated the expansion of its power-projection drive and capabilities in Africa since 2015. It has proved to Moscow that it can succeed in such complex environments and demonstrates to African and Arab regimes that it is a successful and worthwhile partner. Equally important, it has led key Arab governments like the United Araba

Emirates (UAE) to be a sponsor and enabler of Russian policy here. (Blank in Blank, Karasik, 2017)

Russia in the past has been perceived abroad as a European power. Since 1917, however, it has portrayed itself to Africa, Latin America and Asia at different times to be an Asian or developing power, and more recently as a Eurasian power, e.g., another victim of imperialism of imperialism. It has done so to avoid the stigma of being seen as a European colonialist power. Therefore, the current push into Africa to some degree helps consolidate Russia's self-perception as an Asian or Eurasian power distinct from Europe, while also selling this perception to African elites. In this respect, Russia's quest in Africa parallels China's self-portrayal as a victim of and an alternative to Western colonialism in that country's drive for great-power status.

Russia's self-presentation as an opponent of Western unipolarity and quasi-imperial tendencies that insists on not being dictated to — however mendacious it is, in fact — is not merely assumed for its own psychological and political gratification. This stance also aims to appeal to African sensitivities. As Aarie Glas has recently written about the African Union (AU),

"As (author Paul) Williams observes, 'How African states and organizations think about and practice security is intimately related to how they understand their self-image(s) and what it means to be African.' In this regard AU (African Union) officials are united in a common rejection of extra-regional interference as 'othering' behavior that reifies their regional commonality. As one AU Commission official summarized, 'There is a sense of African-ness of belonging here. It ties us together, sharing a common destiny. This shared sense of belonging marks the bounds of a community of practice. Moreover ... it is this dispositional tendency to abhor extra-regional interference in continental peace and security affairs that informs the principle of the 'African solutions to African problems' and its expression in practice within this community.'" (Glas, 2018, pp. 1125-1126)

As in the Latin American and other (e.g., Balkan) cases, Russia seeks to instrumentalize this AU stance to insist that it participate in regional problems with regional security organizations like the AU and the U.N. to prevent Western unilateral actions. (Karpusin interview, 2014). Hence, Russia's recurring insistence in its relations with other states — not just African governments — in documents and statements affirming mutual opposition to external interference (e.g., from the U.S. and Europe) plays well in African and Asian surroundings. But beyond Africa's significance to Russia's self-perception as a Eurasian or Asian actor, Russian policies in Africa strongly consolidate an equally if not even deeper layer

of Russian political self-consciousness. Russian analysts and officials alike agree that the Putin regime's great achievement in foreign policy has been to recover Russia's "sovereignty," e.g., the power to act independently around the world as a great power, without having to answer to anyone for behavior at home and abroad. (Trenin, 2019; Radin, Reach, 2017, p. 34) Therefore, it is a matter not only of psychology but of power and status that Russia perceives itself to be and acts as a great global power. (various) Consequently, once it saw the opportunity and possessed the means to reassert itself in Africa, Russia acted quickly. This quest for self-assertion in Africa began no later than 2012-13, not 2016-17. But that quest received an accelerated impetus from the sanctions imposed by the West in 2014 and the success of Russia's Middle Eastern policies after the 2015 intervention in Syria's civil war. That success not only imparted a new confidence to Moscow, it also convinced Middle Eastern states in Asia and Africa that Russia was here to stay, could function as a reliable interlocutor and even be a beneficial partner.

Since then, if not even earlier, Russia's government has formulated and then implemented a multidimensional strategy — utilizing all the instruments of power in which Moscow has a comparative advantage — to reassert Russian influence in Africa and upon African states, obtain lasting niches of influence and power there and gain naval and other military bases. These instruments of power are deals connected with energy exploration and transport to market, nuclear energy projects, mining, telecommunications deals and the provision of military services to support friendly governments that are under threat. (various) It thereby aims to secure lasting influence on African states' foreign policies in the UN and other international and/or regional security organizations. Obviously, it also hopes to gain profits, develop enduring trade and large-scale investment projects and relationships, and obtain lasting influence on key economic and defense sectors.

Certainly, Russia's trade and investment in Africa to date have been limited. As Paul Stronski recently wrote,

"According to the World Bank, sub-Saharan Africa's exports to Russia were worth about \$0.6 billion in 2017, while its imports from Russia amounted to about \$2.5 billion. This puts the total sub-Saharan-Russian trade turnover at about \$3 billion, which pales in comparison to the region's trade with China and the United States, worth \$56 billion and \$27 billion, respectively. Russia is not a major source of economic development assistance to Africa. What it has been able to offer mostly comes in the form of debt relief, which Russian officials claim amounts to \$20 billion over twenty years. However, even this figure pales in comparison to commercial loans that Chinese entities have extended across the continent. That figure has been estimated to be as high as \$143 billion between 2000 and 2017." (Stronski, 2019)

But it also clearly hopes to gain and has been offered military bases in key strategic zones, e.g., near the Red Sea in return for its military and other services to embattled governments. (Blank in Blank, Karasik, 2017) Moreover, it is moving forward as a result of the Sochi summit and its prior diplomatic and other dealings to conduct other military agreements with African states. From November 25–30, 2019, the South African, Russian and Chinese navies were scheduled to conduct joint exercises off the coast of South Africa for “joint actions to ensure safety of shipping and maritime economic activity.” (Defenceweb, 2019). Similarly, Egyptian paratroopers have participated in joint exercises with Russian and other foreign troops in Russia and Egypt since 2017. (Egyptian Independent, 2017; Sputnik News, 2018; Ahran Online, 2019) Russia is also learning how to project power to Africa, if necessary. For example, Tu-160 strategic nuclear-capable bombers and their support aircraft flew to South Africa in October 2019 as part of a “diplomatic deployment not unlike a similar earlier deployment in 2018 to Venezuela.” (Cenciotti, 2019)

Meanwhile, nonmilitary instruments of power concurrently deployed in Africa benefit African governments and economies. They reinforce pro-Moscow policy tendencies and help establish lasting sectors of influence or of mutual cooperation (often corrupt in nature) across Africa. Moscow also keenly grasps the opportunities to achieve lasting material and intangible benefits of all kinds through its ties with African governments. Russia has discerned that Africa holds enough potential, now and into the future, to establish an enduring basis for the recovery and sustainment of its global great-power status and vision. Therefore, it avidly pursues all kinds of opportunities for material and strategic gain by its willingness to provide nuclear reactors for those who seek them; arms sales; private military forces to uphold a beleaguered regime at home; assistance with finding, refining and transporting energy to European markets; and also obtaining lasting signs of influence, e.g., air and/or naval bases. Ultimately, this could lead to permanent deployments and power projection as suggested above; Russia’s minister of defense says that Russian forces can now conduct remote combat missions. (Sputnik, 2019)

While Russia gains power, status or standing both in and beyond Africa, as well as influence, profits, access to more lasting profits, trade and military bases for future power projection, questions center on what African countries gain from their ties with Russia. In the military sphere, some gains are immediately tangible. African armies get relatively advanced weapons and training on how to use them. Authoritarian African rulers gain a committed cadre of foreign supporters in the guise of Russian private mercenaries, and African military cadres often receive education at Russian military academies or from Russian military advisors and teachers working in their countries. (Kulkova, 2019) In return, Moscow gets bases,

such as in Somaliland, or the offer thereof as in Sudan, influence on members of the military, and a lasting and lucrative arms sales and maintenance relationship. And, it obtains the hope of future clout over African policies as it gains greater leverage within African polities or security organizations.

But for many African states, the tangible gains apparently remain insufficient. Statements from many quarters reflect dissatisfaction with the amount of investments offered, the state of existing projects, the types of the investment projects chosen, the manifold structural and perceptual obstacles to getting Russian projects launched and/or implemented, and the overall state of economic ties with Russia. In other words, Russia has not yet sufficiently exploited the supposed economic opportunities that are currently available in Africa. (Kester Kenn Klomeagh, 2019). To be sure, Russia is trying hard, and the longer-term outcome of the Sochi summit will reveal whether or not Russia can or will act to make large-scale investments in Africa that actually meet African needs and desires. Nevertheless, there are many structural factors working against a massive augmentation of Russia's economic impact on Africa, though there are fewer obstacles to its political impact for the immediate future. In the long term, however, the structural factors that impede massive economic investment on the Chinese scale may become telling. There are many reasons for making this argument.

Currently, Chinese investment dwarfs Russian investment in Africa. In both 2015 and 2018 alone President Xi Jinping promised \$60 billion in investment to Africa. (Sow, 2018) China also has extended more than \$86 billion in commercial loans to African governments and state-owned entities between 2000 and 2014. (Schneidman, Wiegert, 2018) Similarly, the fifth European Union (EU)-Africa Summit in Abidjan in 2017 occurred in the context of two-way trade exceeding \$300 billion. Moreover, at Abidjan, the EU pledged to mobilize more than \$54 billion in "sustainable" investment for Africa by 2020. (Brussels is also negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), with 40 African nations in sub-Saharan Africa to obtain preferential access to imports and to foster widespread market liberalization. (Schneidman, Wiegert, 2018) And, even though U.S. energy self-sufficiency has substantially reduced trade with Africa, the U.S. still averaged \$19 billion annually in trade from 2013-2017. (Schneidman, Wiegert, 2018)

Meanwhile, Venezuela's example also suggests that Chinese investment, like Western investment, aims more at economic benefit and longer-term political gains, while Russian investment aims more overtly at more immediate political and strategic benefits. (Kaplan, 2019) For now, however, the chief beneficiaries of Russian "largesse" are the authoritarians who believe Moscow provides support for their political power and economic corruption. This is the case whether we are

discussing South Africa or the Maghreb. Nevertheless, it is clear that while Russia may provide more immediate military assistance to these rulers, it cannot match China in the range or volume of economic investment that it can provide for long-term consolidation of their power. Moreover, to judge from China's Belt and Road Initiative and its military aspects. (Kamphausen, 2019) China is pursuing, as in Central Asia, (Blank, 2019), a vision of military influence based on its enhanced economic presence and accompanying military presence and capabilities well beyond its borders that may relatively soon surpass whatever Moscow can offer, given China's and more sustained economic power. (Nantulya, 2019)

In addition, the stagnation of the Russian economy that Putin's team neither can nor will overcome impedes Russian foreign and defense policies in many ways. Indeed, Russia has had to cut defense spending. Serious defects in science, technology and human capital (Morrison, Twygg, 2019; Balzer, 2016) are structurally if not culturally rooted in the current system. Foreign investment is quite insufficient and Russia's need for investment obliges it to solicit aid if not investment from India, Gulf States and China. Therefore, it competes with Africa in the global capital market. (Stronski, 2019) It also is clear that public dissatisfaction with socioeconomic stagnation is mounting. Russian investors will look for niches in the energy, mining and arms markets and may enjoy some success there, but they will also encounter more robust African and foreign competition as African economies grow and as more governments realize that Africa is a dynamic, rising economic player. (The Economist, March 9, 2019).

In short, Russia's relative decline continues and limits its positive impact on Africa. But the factors that drive Moscow today add to the likelihood of its overall negative impact on growth, governance and security in Africa, precisely because of Russia's prominence in the arms, energy and mining markets, and the driving impulses of its elites and foreign policy. While — absent major domestic reform — Russia's impact is likely to decline over the long run; in the short and medium term, and in order to shore up its foreign policy status, it may well seek more adventures in Africa.

Thus, Russia aspires to an ambitious role in Africa and some rulers, elites and businessmen would welcome it. But the obstacles inside Russia to the significant expansion of its economic role in Africa remain substantial, deeply rooted and unlikely to change qualitatively anytime soon. Unfortunately, that means Russia will continue to use or instrumentalize Africa in pursuit of objectives that benefit Putin, his entourage and some African elites. But those benefits clearly come at the expense of Africa's long-term interests: security and peace.

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