

RUSSIA'S NEW ROLE IN AFRICA – REACH AND LIMITS OF RUSSIA'S RE-EMERGENCE

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Abstract: This paper aims to show the growing Russian interest in the development perspectives of African countries. Russia decided to join the new scramble for Africa alongside other international actors, such as China, India, etc. However, due to its internal limitations, Russia's ability to project its influence in Africa is limited. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis in this paper is that Russia cannot play a leadership role in Africa, but can represent a kind of strategic alternative for African countries. The paper identifies four dimensions of the relationship between Russia and African countries: political, economic, military, and soft power. Furthermore, four goals of Russian policy towards Africa are determined: projecting power on the global stage; accessing raw materials and natural resources; arms exports and security; supporting energy capacities; and infrastructure development in Africa through Russian companies. The paper also addresses African interests in cooperation with Russia. Lastly, Russia's strategy in Africa has been represented through a SWOT analysis to determine its strengths and weaknesses.

Keywords: Russia, Africa, Central African Republic, soft power, scramble, SWOT analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the goal is to determine the reach, scope, and limitations of Russian influence in Africa. Four dimensions of Russia's relations with African

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The paper presents the findings of a study developed as a part of the research project "Serbia and Challenges in International Relations in 2022", financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by the Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade.

countries are identified: political, economic, military, and soft power.² Then, we will try to determine the objectives of Russian engagement in Africa and identify potential investment models that can lead to the achievement of those goals. We will attempt to perceive the weaknesses of Russian strategy in Africa, either in absolute terms or in comparison with other actors operating in this area (France, the UK, the US, China, India, etc.). However, this is not a comparative study of the external actors in Africa, which is a complex topic that would go beyond the scope of this paper. Comparisons with other actors will be used only to highlight Russia's key comparative advantages or disadvantages over other external actors. Finally, African interests are not neglected. The paper considers what African countries and Africans gain from the Russian presence on the continent.

The main hypothesis claims that Russia cannot play a leadership role in Africa due to its economic-financial, demographic, and naval limitations. However, it can be an interesting alternative to other external actors and serve African countries as a means of diversification vis-à-vis China, India, and the Western bloc. In terms of methodology, we use analytical and synthetic methods as well as the method of concretization. Analytical methods identify individual Russian interests and elements of strategy. Synthetic methods and the method of concretization allow us to define a clear and comprehensive Russian strategy.

As for the literature review, Western academia was basically ignoring the role of Russia in Africa until recently. Things have changed since Russia's intervention in the Central African Republic, and Western authors have resumed their examination of Russia's African policy. The most prominent author is Kimberly Marten, who in her paper from 2019 assessed the role of Russia as destabilising and negative, primarily due to the use of private military company Wagner Group. Media headlines in western media related to this topic are predominantly negative (*BBC News* 2021; Lister and Shukla 2021). On the other hand, Russian authors such as Irina Abramova talk about the favourable aspects of Russia's engagement in Africa, citing opportunities for mutual benefit. The Russian authors are very assertive and provide specific guidelines for improving Russian policy in this area. Other authors have a neutral position, citing the shortcomings and limitations of Russian policy and its specifics in relation to other actors. Finally, it should be noted that the topic of Russia in Africa has not been analysed as much as the policies of China, India, and others.

² We define soft power, according to the description by Joseph Nye, as the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes you want (Nye 2004).

DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES

As we have already pointed out, we identify four dimensions of relations between Russia and African countries: political, economic, military, and soft power. The history of Russian-African relations will be presented within the political dimension. Given that Russia is one of the largest exporters of weapons in the world, we believe that this segment of military cooperation must be singled out. In this section, we also consider the events in the Central African Republic, where Russia has taken an active part in the conflict for the first time in post-Cold War history. The education sector is perceived as the most important segment of Russia's soft power in the region.

Political dimension

The fact that Russia never tried to colonise the African continent³ and that the Soviet Union supported the anti-colonial struggle in Africa gives present-day Russia credibility as a reliable partner. In 1869, for instance, Russia gave Ethiopia military support to threaten the position of the British in their quest to control the Suez Canal. Russia did this because Britain was one of its main European rivals (Beseny 2019). Russia also helped Ethiopia during the First Italo-Ethiopian War from 1895 to 1896. Russia's early interest in Ethiopia, in particular, is especially prescient vis-à-vis later Soviet and post-Soviet calculations. As Yakobson points out, to the Russians of pre-Soviet days, a peaceful penetration of Ethiopia meant not only a means of influencing and controlling the fate of the country, but an opportunity to enter the interior of Africa, to exert influence on Egypt and the whole Nile area, to get a foothold on the Red Sea, and, last but not least, to keep a check on the British. Thus, the Russians saw Ethiopia as the most suitable postern gate "into the African continent" (Yakobson 1963).

After the Revolution of 1917, the Communist International (Rus. *Коминтерн, III Интернационал*) became the primary vehicle for the Kremlin's contacts with Africa and its efforts to politically influence the continent's nascent anti-colonial movements. During the Cold War, Africa was a major theatre of the Soviet Union's competition with the United States. For example, Soviet financial

³ Although there is a narrative according to which Russia should be portrayed as a colonial power in Africa, this was not *de facto* the case. The short-lived presence of the Russians in the town of Sagallo (present-day Djibouti) was the work of the renegade Cossack Ataman Nikolai Ashinov and his 165 Terek Cossacks (it was not an act of the Russian state). The colony existed for less than three weeks (from January 14, 1889, to February 5, of the same year), after which it was conquered by the French (Lunochkin 1999).

assistance was critical to the ANC's establishment of military training camps. Even more important was the flow of arms, including thousands of AK-47s and a few dozen Strela anti-aircraft missile launchers. Scholarships for generations of ANC students enabled them to study in the Soviet Union, both of which were tremendous boosts to the then-embattled movement (Pahm 2010, 72). Similarly, the Soviet Union played an important role in supporting the MPLA in Angola, not only in the period leading up to the Portuguese withdrawal in 1975 but also in the latter struggle against Jonas Savimbi's rival nationalist group, the UNITA (Shubin and Tokarev 2001, 614).

Russia benefits from ties established decades ago through the assistance the Soviet Union provided to many African anti-colonial leaders. By the time the Soviet Union formally dissolved, more than 50,000 Africans had studied in Soviet universities and military and technical institutes, and at least another 200,000 Africans had received Soviet training on African soil (Pahm 2014). However, in the 1990s, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the African continent was neglected by the "new Russia", and relations with African countries were sacrificed for chimerical expectations of "aid" from the West and the absolute atrophy of Russian influence worldwide. In total, nine embassies, three consulates, and a variety of trade missions and student exchange programmes were closed in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's dissolution (Marten 2019, 155).

Ever since Vladimir Putin succeeded Boris Yeltsin as president, there has been a slow but steady renewal of Russian interest in Africa. The first visit of a modern Russian head of state to an African country occurred in 2005, when Vladimir Putin visited Egypt. Another visit happened in 2015. Although he was expected much earlier, Putin visited South Africa in September 2006 and signed with President Thabo Mbeki a treaty of friendship and partnership between Russia and South Africa. In June 2009, Dmitry Medvedev visited Egypt, Angola, Namibia, and Nigeria (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 55).

Likewise, a number of African leaders visited Moscow. In 2001 alone, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, Lansana Conté of Guinea, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia made official visits to Moscow (Pahm 2010, 75). In 2016, two African heads of state, King Mohammed VI of Morocco and Alfa Condé, President of Guinea, visited Russia. The latter took part in the annual Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2016, and there he suggested the idea of establishing a Russia-Africa forum, which would be a convenient platform for discussion of new joint projects and development programs. The idea was neither rejected nor obviously supported (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 55). Russia welcomed 43 heads of state or government, along with dozens of business and community leaders, in Sochi in 2019 (Paquette 2019).

Russia seeks to develop a comprehensive policy toward Africa. Two departments in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs deal directly with Africa: the Department of Africa (sub-Saharan) and the Department of the Middle East and North Africa. It should be noted that the top officials of the ministry are familiar with the Global South. Minister Sergey Lavrov's initial speciality was Sri Lanka. Former (until September 2019) State Secretary and Deputy Minister Grigory Karasin was the first Soviet student of Hausa at a Nigerian university, while the current Deputy Minister and President's Special Representative for the Middle East and Africa, Mikhail Bogdanov, served as ambassador to Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 53).

We should mention two other executive bodies: the Ministry of Economic Development, which includes the Department of Asia and Africa and, in particular, supervises the work of Russian trade missions abroad (Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation); the other one is the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which has its own division covering the Middle East and North African countries, and a division covering African countries (Minpromtorg of the Russian Federation). At the same time, Russia has invested a large amount of money in gathering information about Africa. The best example is the Institute for African Studies within the Russian Academy of Sciences, which now embraces thirteen research units, a working group, and an information centre, employing a total of more than one hundred academic staff members (Pahm 2014).

In short, Russian policy towards Africa has two pillars: (i) economic access to international markets and (ii) the use of multilateralism to promote Russian geopolitical hegemony" (Pahm 2010, 75).

Russia supports Africans in their desire to address domestic challenges (related to security and economic development) on their own and actively engage in shaping global architecture. Clearly, social and economic progress on the continent correlates with long-lasting peace and stability. A good example here is the African Union (AU), which granted observer status to Russia in 2006. Both Russia and the AU are deeply interested in further cooperation in line with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in September 2014 between the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Commission of the African Union on the procedure of political consultations (Abramova 2017, 11). Moscow sees as a priority the diversification of ties with continental and regional bodies in Africa, the foremost being the AU. Putin's special representative for the Middle East and Africa regularly attends AU summits (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 56–57).

One of the main multilateral stepping-stones for Russia in Africa is the BRICS. Naturally, South Africa is regarded by Moscow as a key partner on the African continent. Bilateral relations are based on a joint declaration on the establishment of a comprehensive strategic partnership signed in March 2013.

(Daniel and Shubin 2018, 57). Recently, Russia has also been trying to expand its cooperation with African regional economic communities, especially the SADC.

Economic dimension

From the point of view of political economy, the fundamental similarity between African and Russian developmental paradigms lies in the fact that their natural resources are used as a primary source of revenue (Fituni and Abramova 2010, 60). Russia's economic interests are different from those of China and India, for whom access to Africa's natural resources, especially its hydrocarbons, is a strategic necessity if they are to continue to sustain the growth of their economies (Pahm 2014). That is not the case with Russia, which has these resources in abundance. It cannot be overlooked, however, that Russia tries to mine certain raw materials, such as aluminium, chrome, manganese, mercury, titanium, copper, nickel, zinc, bauxite, and diamonds, in Africa (Pahm 2014; *The Conversation* 2019). Although Russia is usually in the top ten countries in terms of strategic reserves of most of these minerals, it strives to save up its strategic reserves and perform mining elsewhere where the whole process is cheaper and more deregulated.

In total, twenty major Russian companies participate in mining in Africa. Russia is involved in a mega-project to develop Zimbabwe's biggest platinum mine at Darwendale, which would create about 15,000 jobs and produce about a million ounces of platinum a year (*Chronicle Zimbabwe* 2015). Russia, on the other hand, wants to expand its partnership with Africa beyond minerals, to include engineering and research, as well as the ability to market advanced technology. For example, Russian advanced technology and financial resources are being used to create the Angolan National System of Satellite Communications and Broadcasting (ANGOSAT). Work on the project began in 2013. ANGOSAT-1, which was launched in 2017, supports Angola's telecommunications infrastructure and improves the quality of radio signals, television broadcasts, and telephone and internet services in the country (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 57–59).

To utilise its part of the complementary relations, Russia is now seeking to exploit conventional gas and oil fields in Africa. Part of its long-term energy strategy is to use Russian companies to create new streams of energy supply. For example, Russian companies have made significant investments in Algeria's oil and gas industries. They have also invested in Libya, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Egypt (Beseny 2019). In addition to Gazprom, other Russian firms are active in the Algerian oil and gas sector. Stroytransgaz has completed a 403-kilometre gas pipeline running from Haud el-Hamra to Arzrev and is working on another 273-kilometre-long pipeline from Hadjret En Nouss to Sougueur. In tandem

with Sroytransgaz, Rosneft pursues oil and gas exploration in largely untapped southern Algeria, while Soyuzneftegaz, another Russian oil and gas company, is pioneering the local use of advanced technologies to enhance yield and rehabilitate older fields (Titorenko 2006, 163–169).

Russian-African trade increased more than tenfold between 2000 and 2012. Trade between Russia and sub-Saharan Africa started at low levels but increased rapidly to \$4.8 billion in 2018 from \$1.8 billion in 2010. In the same year, Russia's exports to sub-Saharan Africa totalled \$3 billion, while imports from sub-Saharan Africa came in at \$1.7 billion. In 2015, Algeria, together with Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, and South Africa, accounted for 80% of Africa's exports to Russia. Cote d'Ivoire saw a strong increase in mutual trade with Russia in 2018, particularly in agricultural products and energy (Signé 2019).

The positive incentive for Russia-Africa cooperation in the economic sphere was created by Moscow's decision to cancel the debt of African countries (around \$20 billion; it is difficult to determine the exact amount because of the various currencies involved in the trade during the USSR) in 2012. Russia also introduced a preferential system for traditional African export commodities such as fruits. Several agreements have been signed with African countries on the use of remaining debts to fund development projects. There are a number of bilateral intergovernmental commissions with African countries, but unfortunately, not all of them are active (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 59).

According to the African Development Bank, Russian companies invested about \$20 billion in Africa in 2014 in the projects ranging from energy production and mining to infrastructure and fisheries. Russian business interests across the continent are promoted by the Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation with African Countries (AFROCOM), which brings together ministries and other government agencies as well as companies large and small. AFROCOM is headed by the chairman of state-owned Vnesheconombank (VEB), which created the Russian Agency on Insurance of Export Credits and Investments in 2011 to facilitate the activities of Russian companies in Africa by protecting export credits and investments from political risk (Pahm 2014). More recently, Russia has started organising numerous economic forums. The three-day June 2018 Saint Petersburg Economic Forum reunited Russia and Africa and gave African countries the chance to meet with Russia's foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov. The Russia-SADC business forum that was held in February in Moscow is another example of the strengthening of ties between Russia and Africa in a broad range of economic fields (Signé 2019). Cooperation with the regional integration group Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is in force, and with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is

ongoing. This cooperation with RECs may benefit Russia in many ways. The future will show if its full potential is achieved.

The first-ever Russia-Africa summit in full capacity was held on October 23-24, 2019, in Sochi, marking the culminating point of the return of Russia to Africa, with more than 50 African leaders and more than 6,000 delegates from 104 countries attending the summit. During the two days, Russia and Africa signed more than 50 agreements worth over \$12 billion. Russia presented a map of Russian competencies for Africa, which included information and analytical software. More than 170 Russian companies and organisations participated (*The Standard* 2019).

For the development of economic ties between Russia and Africa, the segment of small and medium businesses is very important. Russian businesses in Africa face competition from other countries, but even worse, they face malicious reporting that could be potentially damaging to their reputation and, consequently, business performance. For example, South African press reports on the cooperation of Moscow and Tshwane in the field of atomic energy have been negative. Russian entrepreneurs that do business in Africa need the help of the Russian state. In 2011, the Russian Export Insurance Agency was established. Then, in 2015, the government established the Russian Export Centre as a “daughter” of the state-owned Vnesheconombank, to operate as “one window” for both financial and other steps to support exports. At the same time, Russian business people interested in Africa have taken some steps to organise themselves. In 2009, the Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation with Sub-Saharan Africa (Afrocom) united more than 90 Russian entities, including ministries, agencies, organisations, and companies representing big, small, and medium-sized businesses. The committee now operates under the auspices of the Russian Export Centre. However, despite these initiatives, efforts to improve business relations between Africa and Russia have remained weak when compared to other players’ mechanisms for multilateral cooperation, such as Chinese FOCAC and the India-Africa Forum (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 59–60). The reasons for this are numerous. Firstly, Russia lacks financial resources in comparison to other actors such as China, India, Japan, the US, etc. For this reason, Russia must use its financial resources more selectively. Russia has the financial know-how to implement individual projects, but it lacks the resources of, for example, China to cover the entire African continent with a variety of different projects, especially big residential (non-profit-generating) projects. Secondly, both China and India have a larger diaspora in Africa than Russia. Establishing business connections with the diaspora is very important.⁴

⁴ China and Russia in Africa do not act in agreement, but they are not opposed either. See more about the possibilities of an alliance between Russia and China in: Lađevac 2015.

Military cooperation

Defence and military cooperation are very important for Russia, given that Russia is one of the leading manufacturers of military equipment. Russia has traditionally been one of Africa's main arms suppliers. During the Cold War, several armed liberation organisations and African countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Guinea (Beseny 2019), were involved. In 2001, Russia signed a \$120 million contract to equip Sudan with ten MiG-29SE fighters and two MiG-24UB dual-seat trainers. In 2011, Russia signed another deal to sell two dozen Mi-24 attack helicopters and fourteen Mi-8 transport helicopters to Sudan. In general, the Russian model can be defined as arms first, business concessions later. As demonstrated by the cases of Mozambique and Angola, in many African countries, military assistance is used to get access to strategic economic sectors, such as the energy and mining sectors of African countries (Signé 2019).

The number of arms supplied by Russia keeps increasing, and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) found that Russia's sales of weaponry to African countries in 2017 had doubled compared to 2012. China and the US are crucial weapons suppliers in the world in general, but in Africa, they fall behind Russia, which supplied 39% of Africa's imported arms between 2017 and 2013. SIPRI's data on major weapons transfers show that the main arms transferred by Russia in 2016-2017 were principally second-hand equipment such as combat and transport helicopters, aircraft, and surface-to-air missile systems (Signé 2019). That implicitly means that Russian military technicians are still fulfilling maintenance contracts on this second-hand equipment (Marten 2019, 158).

Russia is also providing training for South African air force pilots to increase their flying hours (*DefenceWeb* 2016). Since 2015, Russia has signed more than 20 military cooperation agreements with African states, any one of which could theoretically evolve into a permanent basing presence (Hedenskog 2018). Moreover, in September 2018, Russia announced an agreement with Eritrea to build a naval logistics facility in Assab, just a few hundred miles from US AFRICOM's naval hub in Djibouti (Dahir 2018). The Russian Navy also escorts the Russian and foreign vessels in the Gulf of Aden as part of the fight against piracy. Eight attempts to board ships were stopped, and four pirate ships were detained. The Russian sailors' actions were highly commended around the world, and many partners called for developing cooperation against piracy (Fituni and Abramova 2010, 186).

Russia has contributed troops, expertise, and military observers to UN peacekeeping operations in Angola, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South

Sudan, Sudan, and Western Sahara. In 2012 alone, Russia contributed \$2 million to the AU's Peace Fund (Pahm 2014).

Another significant military engagement by Russia is in the Central African Republic (CAR). In 2013, the ongoing power struggle in the CAR became religious. Seleka-Muslim rebels seized power in the primarily Christian country. Soon after, in 2014, anti-balaka-Christian militias rose up and pressured Seleka rebels to hand power to a transitional government. Soon after, the Seleka group split and started fighting among each other, as well as anti-balaka groups. This conflict was too complex for Western countries to handle, and it did not fit into the desirable binary narrative of good guys vs. bad guys because all sides committed atrocities during the conflict. Among the top 10 contributors to the MINUSCA peacekeeping mission, there are no European countries. A small French contingent was present there, but on a different task.

Russia has taken advantage of the security vacuum. For example, Russia donated its own weapons to the CAR in 2018 in order to surpass France's offer and achieve a monopoly on strategic access in the country (Signé 2019). Russia may be experimenting with a model of intervention in the CAR that it could use elsewhere. Western authors, particularly Kimberly Marten, are harsh critics of Russia's participation in the CAR. She says that firstly, Russian-trained security forces in the CAR are not being integrated into the UN-backed EU training mission with its legal and human rights standards. A parallel, Russia-controlled national security structure, is emerging that could be used to protect Russian interests while thwarting democratic oversight of the CAR military. Secondly, while Russia did play a positive role in fast-tracking a peace accord in the war-torn country in February 2019, rebel militia leaders are being integrated into the CAR government and military institutions with inadequate vetting and oversight. Since the state currently controls only 20 percent of the country's territory, this hasty integration throws into doubt the CAR's ability to achieve real sovereignty. The people of CAR will suffer the most, she says, if Russia cannot be persuaded to play by well-established international peacekeeping norms, since they are the ones who will be dealing with illiberal security forces and a lack of accountability in their supposedly democratic new government (Marten 2019, 162–163). However, it remains unclear what norms she had in mind given the well-known sexual scandals involving United Nations peacekeepers from various countries that took place in Cambodia and elsewhere. Interestingly, the lack of accountability is significant only when it comes to the Russians. Anyhow, we can compare the Russian strategy in the CAR to the Soviet strategy in Afghanistan. The goal is to secure the government in the capital and the big cities while the countryside is left to the rebels. In this way, Russia wants to ensure the stability of the local government

and thus maintain the legitimacy of its presence because it justifies its presence through bilateral calls for cooperation.⁵

Soft power

Russia's soft power on the African continent is represented through humanitarian aid, the construction of Russian humanitarian centres, the teaching of the Russian language, the education of Africans in Russia, the development of scientific cooperation, the provision of medical care, and assistance in natural disasters (Konstantinova 2020, 6).

The Russian centres of science and culture (*Русские центры науки и культуры – РЦНК*) are the focal points of Russian soft power in Africa. These centres are present in eight countries: Egypt, Zambia, Morocco, the Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Tunisia, Ethiopia, and South Africa. In these centres, cultural workers organise their meetings, Russian films and TV shows are played, and Russian language courses are also organised. The interest of African youth in the Russian language is growing. In Egypt and the Republic of the Congo, departments of the Russian language were opened at the faculties of philology (Konstantinova 2020, 6–7). Moreover, an agreement was signed between Zambia's Copperbelt University and the People's Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University–*Российский университет дружбы народов*, formerly the Patrice Lumumba University), to set up a regional centre offering Russian language courses to students in Botswana, Namibia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Angola (Signé 2019).

Another element of soft power is the offices of the “Russian world” (*Русский мир*). They are located at the leading universities in many African countries. These offices also provide Russian language courses. There are also Russian schools that mainly serve to educate the children of Russian diplomats, but are also open to African students (Konstantinova 2020, 7).

In 2020, 17,000 students from Africa studied at Russian universities. That is insufficient compared to China, which had about 50,000 students in the same year. Russian vaccines are also a significant source of soft power. These are vaccines against yellow fever, poliomyelitis, the experimental Ebola vaccine, as well as the COVID-19 vaccine (Konstantinova 2020, 8). Russia's contribution to eradicating the Ebola virus was over \$60 million, received at the AU summit in January 2016 (Daniel and Shubin 2018, 57).

⁵ Russia also has extensive experience in international negotiations, calming and stabilising conflicts. See more in Jović-Lazić i Lađevac 2013.

Another factor is the so-called “people’s diplomacy”, which is primarily embodied in the Russian Orthodox Church, but also in various sports activities. The Russian Orthodox Church is most active in Ethiopia, but also in the traditionally religious Congo (both the DRC and the RC). The 2018 FIFA World Cup also promoted Russia on the African continent (Konstantinova 2020, 9). The last source of power is the media. RT, Sputnik TASS, and TV news (*TB-Hosocmi*) are present in Africa (Konstantinova 2020, 10).

For diplomacy and support, Russia offers a non-Western-centric option. In 2015, Russia created an alternative credit rating agency to counterbalance the influence that Western credit agencies had in deciding on the access to finance of the developing world (Signé 2019).

GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION MODELS OF RUSSIA’S STRATEGY TOWARDS AFRICA

This section presents four specific goals of Russia’s strategy on the African continent.

Goal 1: Projecting power on the global stage

African countries constitute the largest voting bloc in the United Nations General Assembly. By supporting them, Russia is cultivating allies in its challenge to the current United States and Euro-Atlantic-dominated security order. This strategy already proved useful to China when it managed to push Taiwan out of the United Nations with the help of the votes of African countries. Russian diplomacy has seen the benefits of this strategy, and it is making an effort to win over the hearts and minds of African countries. By doing so, Russia will increase its chances of blocking resolutions within the United Nations General Assembly that are to Russia’s detriment.

Goal 2: Accessing raw materials and natural resources

In terms of natural resources, Russia is trying to use its complementarity with Africa. Unlike other external actors, Russia is not looking for fossil fuels or gold. Russia actually needs other rare elements such as manganese (100%), chrome (80%), and cobalt, to name a few. Bauxites imported from Africa, for example, account for more than 60% of Russian aluminium production. Production costs in Africa are usually much lower than in Russia. From the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Central African Republic, Russian companies are scaling up their activities in the mining of resources such as coltan, cobalt, gold, and diamonds. In Zimbabwe, a joint venture between Russia’s JSC Afromet and Zimbabwe’s Pen East Ltd is developing one of the world’s largest deposits of platinum group metal. In Angola, Russian mining company Alroser recently increased its stake in local producer Catoca to 41% in a deal that provides the

diamond giant with a production base outside Russia. Russia also wants to use its mostly state-owned oil and gas companies to create new streams of energy supply. In 2018, for instance, Nigerian oil and gas exploration company Oranto Petroleum announced that it would cooperate with Russia's largest oil producer, Rosneft, to develop 21 oil assets across 17 African countries. Several Russian companies have also made significant investments in Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Egypt's oil and gas industries (Adibe 2019). Therefore, unlike other external partners, Russia does not want African oil and gas, but rather to develop infrastructure (for transporting those commodities) and thus make money while leaving the possibility to connect that infrastructure with its own in the future.

Goal 3: Arms exports and security

In recent years, Russia has become the largest supplier of arms to Africa, accounting for 35% of arms exports to the region, followed by China (17%), the United States (9.6%), and France (6.9%). Since 2015, Russia has signed more than 20 bilateral military cooperation agreements with African states (Adibe 2019). For Russia, arms exports are a source of revenue but also a projection of influence. Russian weapons have a good cost-quality ratio compared to those of other manufacturers. Moreover, its reliability is very good, so it can often be used as “second-hand merchandise” with great efficiency. The last factor that gives Russian weapons a competitive advantage over rivals is the fact that Russian or Soviet weapons have been present in Africa since the “liberation period”⁶ so that forces on the ground are familiar with and accustomed to their use.

The scenario from the Central African Republic is a model according to which Russia could act in Africa, and that is by filling the security gaps that arise due to fatigue or lack of interest by Western partners. Russia's goal in such engagements is to provide security for a government that is willing to support cooperation with Russia. Russia is not guided by ideological principles in such types of cooperation.

Goal 4: Supporting energy and power development in Africa through Russian companies

In a way, this fourth goal represents the development of the second goal, which is the energy infrastructure development. The lack of affordable, reliable electricity in Africa makes it a lucrative location for Russia's energy and power industry. Several state-owned Russian companies, such as Gazprom, Lukoil, Rostec, and Rosatom, are active in Africa. Activities are largely concentrated in

⁶ The liberation period represents various types of armed rebellions that eventually led to the liberation of African countries from colonialism. There is no exact definition or periodization because it is different for each country.

Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Nigeria, and Uganda. Thus far, Rosatom has signed memorandums and agreements to develop nuclear energy with 18 African countries, including Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. In 2018 alone, Rosatom agreed to build four 1200 MW VVER-type nuclear reactors in Egypt. This includes construction and maintenance valued at \$60 billion, with a Russian loan of up to \$25 billion at an annual interest rate of 3% (Adibe 2019).

As we said, the Russian academic community is very proactive in Russian engagement in Africa. Irina Abramova came up with five basic principles on how to identify the regions most attractive for investment in Sub-Saharan Africa. These are common principles in both applied (strategic investment analysis, project investment, venture capital, private equity investment analysis, and valuation country/region risk assessment) and academic methods. These principles are as follows:

- Objective indicators of economic development, demographic and resource potential;
- Differentiation of the investment climate by different economic levels;
- The investment climate of the region is more than just the sum of investment climates in the countries of this region (the synergy effect);
- The investment climate has to be plugged into the regional economy (Abramova 2017, 19).

Based on these principles, Abramova formulated four possible Russian investment models in Africa:

1) The resource-oriented investment model implies that a Russian investor seeks to get stable access to a strategic resource (for instance, oil, gas, aluminium, manganese, or palladium). As we pointed out several times, the focus is on access, not extraction. It is a capital-intensive model with big investments and a relatively long return period. Often, this strategy caters to large Russian corporations with a hefty government stake. The model can ensure Russia's access to rare raw materials and deny these materials to rival countries. As for geographic distribution, the model defines four main areas: the Western Guinean Region (including Guinea, Sierra-Leone, Ghana, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria), the Eastern Guinean Region (Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo/Brazzaville, the Angolan seashore), the Southern Region (the province of Sheba in the DRC and Luanda in Angola, and the Copperbelt in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Mozambique).

2) The market-based investment model in Africa implies that Russian investors seek to set up a stable and profitable market for their products. It could either be a market for investment products or a place for retail trade. This model caters to large manufacturers, sales companies, wholesalers, and retail chains, as

well as SMEs. This model can be applied to the service market as well, including IT and mobile communications, the most rapidly growing market in Africa.

3) The efficiency-based investment model. This model favours investment in sub-regional economic drivers such as Nigeria (West Africa), Kenya (East Africa), Ethiopia (East and partly Central Africa), and South Africa (Southern Africa). These countries accommodate local investment headquarters, which run the expansion into neighbouring countries through local firms. They boast better business infrastructure within their geographic sub-regions. The strategy goes far beyond the issues of business management and harmonisation within Africa. In many cases, corporations are eager to build an African-based production chain rather than export goods to the African market from Russia or other countries. Some African branches may become logistic hubs for subsidiaries in Brazil, South Africa, and India.

4) The investment model of strategic expansion is an economic strategy typical of particular African states or big corporations working in the national interest. For some reason, private companies may also join the economic expansion into Africa. Such an approach requires a joint, harmonised economic policy implemented by all the actors on a mutually beneficial basis. Abramova states that in some ways, this is a mimicry of China's policy (2017, 19-20).⁷

However, the Russian model has many weaknesses. We can divide them into two groups: challenges at the micro and macro level. Micro challenges are mainly related to corporate culture and include:

- Difficulties in adapting to local sanitary and climate conditions, as well as Africans' mentality, mindset, traditions, customs, and rights;
- To uphold the universal code of corporate social responsibility and contractual obligations;
- To stay alert and cautious when dealing with local businessmen;
- To eliminate the superstition that bribes are omnipotent on the continent (Abramova 2017, 28-29);
- Young and inexperienced entrepreneurial class, especially inexperienced in doing business in international markets, particularly in Africa. As proof of this, the authors offer the fact that 90% of Russian entrepreneurs operating in the African market use international intermediaries (Deitch and Korendyasov 2010).

Macro challenges include limitations connected to the conjuncture between Africa and Russia. Limitations from the Russian side include:

⁷ Abramova has also developed a whole range of criteria that must meet these principles and models. They can be found in the same article, but we will not cite them here for the sake of being concise.

- Underestimating the potential of the African market and the potential of Russian-African cooperation;
- Strong competition from Western multinational companies as well as economic entities from China, India, Japan, and Brazil. This limitation also includes Russia's modest economic and financial resources in relation to other external players;
- Restrictions on transport infrastructure between Russia and Africa;
- Lack of stronger state aid to Russian entrepreneurs as well as modest African development programmes (Deitch and Korendyasov 2010).

AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON RUSSIAN INVESTMENT

Russia and African countries are facing a new challenge as they pursue an equitable world order in line with the new realities. Africans still consider Russia as one of their best allies in the international arena and as a natural counterweight to the hegemonic ambitions of a foreign power (or a group of powers). The main reason for that is the positive historical heritage. From the African perspective, Russia offers a strategic alternative to America's global hegemony, China's economic diplomacy, and the lingering influence of Africa's former colonial masters (Beseny 2019). Russia is highlighting collaboration over aid, and that message sounds appealing to some leaders who view the West's outreach as patronizing. Bakary Sambe, director of the Timbuktu Institute African Centre for Peace Studies in Dakar, said: "Africa no longer wants to have all our eggs in one basket". He also added, "We want equal exchanges, as opposed to colonial power relations" (Paquette 2019). Russian military support offers come without political conditions imposed by American and European governments (Pahm 2010, 80).

However, there are limiting factors from the African side as well. Those are:

- Lack of credible information on the potentials of both the Russian and African markets;
- Clientelism from former colonial blocs, as well as the activities of Western NGOs;
- Underdevelopment of institutional and entrepreneurial structures and professional services;
- Commercial risk reflected in the inert bureaucratic structure;
- Lack of market and business culture (Deitch and Korendyasov 2010, 15–16).

Investing in Africa has its risks, but as Mzwandile Collen Masina (at the time Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry of South Africa) said at the 20th Saint-Petersburg Economic Forum in June 2016, "It is not risky to invest in Africa, it is risky not to invest in it." Investing in Africa has potential benefits that outweigh

those risks. Therefore, Russia has to consider Africa as a strategic partner (Abramova 2017, 14).

THE SWOT ANALYSIS OF THE RUSSIAN ENGAGEMENT IN AFRICA

When giving a final assessment of Russia’s actions in Africa, a SWOT analysis is used. The SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool for identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in business strategy or project planning, company policy, and so on. It has its origins in marketing and strategic management, but it can also be applied in other fields such as oil and gas, mining and metallurgy, business, manufacturing, transportation, agriculture, etc. (Namugenyi et al. 2019). We strongly believe that it can be used in IR as well, especially when considering strategies or policies.

The strengths and weaknesses given in the SWOT matrix represent the Russian point of view. Russia can influence them by modifying its own policies and strategies. On the other hand, opportunities and threats cannot be fully influenced by Russia because these are circumstances that occur regardless of Russian actions. Opportunities and threats are largely the product of the actions of other international actors.

We define the SWOT matrix of Russian engagement with Africa as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
Good historical heritage	Absence of a clear strategic policy
Absence of conditioning	Lack of financial resources and naval capacities
Natural resource compatibility	Lack of a large diaspora in Africa
Good military cooperation	
Opportunities	Threats
Security vacuum	Competition from other external players, above all India and China
Further potential for military cooperation	The possibility of deteriorating relations with other countries due to mutual confrontation in Africa
The eagerness of Africans to learn the Russian language and study in Russia	
African countries are looking for a partner to invest in the mining and energetics sectors	
The rising (bullish) trend in raw material prices	

Source: Author

Russia's main strength in Africa is a positive historical heritage, which dates back to the time of Tsarist Russia, continued during communism, and has been maintained to this day. We emphasise once again that Russia has never been a coloniser in Africa. Furthermore, Russia never sets political conditions when negotiating and concluding agreements with African countries, whether it is the recognition of Crimea as part of Russia or any other condition related to human rights, democracy, or freedom of the media. Although it has certain mining operations in Africa, Russia should not be perceived as an exploiter of African resources. In fact, Russia's investment in oil and gas infrastructure on the African continent positions Russia as an investor and strategic partner, not an exploiter. By exporting military equipment, Russia generates income, projects influence, and also significantly contributes to the stability of African countries.

The main weakness of Russia is the absence of a full-fledged coherent policy towards African countries. Russia's presence is mostly limited to the growing ties of major Russian companies, which seldom have a vision of business development in Africa. In those cases when they do have a strategy, this strategy is not really a part of any concrete national action plan for the African continent. As Abramova puts it:

“It is high time for us to develop new forms of economic cooperation, including marketing and finance. If Russia wants to penetrate into African markets and stay there, it needs to set up a consistent diplomatic, political, and financial infrastructure. The point is that the Russian business needs state support to stand a higher chance in African markets. The new models of Russian-African partnership should combine national and corporate interests to benefit from state and private assets alike” (Abramova 2017, 13–14).

Financial resources are Russia's biggest problem. Nominally speaking, Russia does not lack financial resources. It is a large, rich, and powerful country, but in relative terms, Russian investments cannot be compared with Chinese, Indian, American, or French ones. The Russian diaspora is small and scattered when compared to the Chinese and Indian ones. It also lacks the depth and clientelistic connections that business circles from the former colonial powers have.

Despite the weaknesses, many opportunities are opening up for Russia. The case of the Central African Republic is a model of security cooperation that needs to be copied. By filling the security vacuum, Russia can compensate for the lack of financial resources to some extent. Russia must make the most of the eagerness of young Africans to learn Russian and study in Russia, which means that it must make the most of the soft power mechanisms. Furthermore, Russia must use the opportunity that African countries are looking for a strategic partner in the energy sector. The projected growth of energy prices in the future will certainly have a positive impact on cooperation in this area.

Finally, competition from other external players such as China, India, former colonial powers, and now even Japan and Turkey, is Russia's biggest threat in Africa due to the fact that Russia does not have sufficient financial capacity compared to most of these countries and also has less developed soft power mechanisms compared to most of them. Russia's possible misunderstandings with some of these actors that may occur on African soil in the future could have the potential to disrupt overall bilateral relations with one of the opposing countries. As an example, we cite the short-term deterioration of Russian-Turkish relations due to the events in Syria, specifically the shooting down of a Russian bomber by Turkish fighter jets.

CONCLUSION

Due to the lack of a clear and comprehensive strategy for Africa, a lack of financial resources, naval capacity, and a small diaspora in Africa, Russia is in a subordinate position in comparison to other international actors. Therefore, it cannot play a leadership role in Africa. On the other hand, Russia has many positive factors on its side. Good historical heritage, lack of conditioning, the fact that Russia is not perceived as an exploiter of African resources, and good military cooperation contribute to the Russian image. For African countries, Russia represents a significant alternative to other more dominant actors. This pattern is mutually beneficial because it allows Russia to make profit and expand its influence, at least to some extent. On the other hand, it provides African countries with an instrument of diversification in relation to other actors. So far, the security model that Russia is implementing in the Central African Republic is satisfactory. At the time of writing, this model is proliferating further into the region, in countries like Mali and Burkina Faso. However, the final results of Russia's security engagement in West Africa will be revealed in the near future.

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НОВА УЛОГА РУСИЈЕ У АФРИЦИ – ДОСТИГНУЋА И ГРАНИЦЕ ПОНОВНОГ ПОЈАВЉИВАЊА РУСИЈЕ

Анстракт: Овај рад има за циљ да покаже растуће интересовање Русије за развојне перспективе афричких земаља. Русија је одлучила да се придружи новој јагми за Африку заједно са другим међународним актерима, као што су Кина, Индија, итд. Међутим, због својих унутрашњих ограничења, способност Русије да пројектује свој утицај у Африци је ограничен. Стога је у овом раду предложена хипотеза да Русија не може имати водећу улогу у Африци, али може представљати неку врсту стратешке алтернативе за афричке земље. У раду су идентификоване четири димензије односа Русије и афричких земаља: политичка, економска, војна и димензија меке моћи. Такође су одређена четири циља руске политике према Африци: пројектовање моћи на глобалној сцени, приступ сировинама и природним ресурсима, извоз оружја и безбедност, и подршка развоју енергетике у Африци преко руских компанија. Рад се такође бави афричким интересима у сарадњи са Русијом. На крају, руска стратегија у Африци је подвргнута СВОТ анализи како би се утврдиле њене снаге и слабости.

Кључне речи: Русија, Африка, Централноафричка Република, мека моћ, јагма за Африку, СВОТ анализа.

Received: 15. 12. 2021

Accepted: 25. 01. 2022