

# Power in The Sun: An Evaluation of The Economic Effects of Russian-Africa Relations Within A Decade

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Submitted: 2023, Dec 30; Accepted: 2024, Jan 20; Published: 2024, Feb 03

**Citation:** ACMA, B., TEKANG, P. K. (2024). Power in The Sun: An Evaluation of The Economic Effects of Russian-Africa Relations Within A Decade. *Politi Sci Int.* 2(1), 1-9.

## Abstract

In an era of immense geopolitics where a win by one superpower is viewed as a lost for the other, especially with the Russian [China, Iran, North Korea] vs Ukrainian [US, Canada/West] with neutral states mostly from Africa, Turkiye, watching. The continent of Africa is a haven of political clout accompanied by its shrewd area with immense foreign appetite from foreign powers among which is the Russian Federation [the defunct Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, USSR]. The need for economic, political, and military interest has culminated to Moscow's ties with the continent within a decade especially with her war against [Ukraine+West]. The holding of 1st and 2nd Russia-Africa Summits in Sochi (2019) and Saint Petersburg (2023) is an indication of closer ties with wide agreements signed. Despite the broadening of relations on a multilateral front between Russia and many African states, many western critics have described these relations as 'wolfish' just like that of the French. The motive of this article is to map the economic effects of Russo-Africa relations on Africa in the 21st Century within a decade. The paper adopts a historical approach and data generated are from secondary sources. The theoretical yardstick adopted by the article is that of Constructivism which highlights these relations from the 2000s. The paper concludes that Moscow's economic engagement in the continent is minimal as compared to economic impact of Western rivals, and Russia trades more with the West prior to the outbreak of the Russia-Ukrainian standoff. However, with full commitment on mutual-trust on both sides, positive economic effects will accrue from these relations in future especially after the 'Special Russian Military Operation'.

**Keywords:** Africa, Economic Effects, Foreign Policy, Foreign Powers, Russia, and Western Powers.

## 1. Introduction

With ties forged under Soviet rule, Russia has historically enjoyed warm relations with many African countries, as their economic and ideological ambitions often align and their ties are bolstered by a mutual mistrust of the West. The spread of Africa's votes on United Nations (UN) resolutions to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, however, indicates three key themes. Firstly, many African countries are pulled in competing directions by broader global geopolitics—for many, abstaining was the rational choice. Secondly, Russia's support on the continent may be overstated and is not unconditional. Finally, Russian influence is often limited by the extent to which it can influence the political elite of a country and in some cases co-opt that elite into patronage networks [1].

Barabanov et al., earmarked that the geopolitical landscape has changed beyond recognition in the time since the first Russia-Africa Summit was held in the autumn of 2019, laying the groundwork for an ambitious programme to expand Russia's cooperation with Africa [2]. This is still true today,

albeit adjusted for Russia's wholly different geopolitical circumstances. The actual global competition for Africa has become so fierce that it is impossible to ignore it. In addition, Russia's geopolitical opponents are much more aggressively trying to create obstacles to cooperation with Africa than before. Russia's return to Africa was first discussed at official venues seven years ago, when the roundtable discussion titled "Russia-Africa: Expanding Frontiers" was first held at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum. Since then, the Russian business community was advised to pay attention to the continent that boasts enormous reserves of natural resources and a growing population [1.2 billion then and 1.4 billion now] to which Russia has much to offer.

The holding of the 2nd Edition of the Russia-Africa summit at St. Petersburg though with a decline in attendance as compared to the first edition of African head of states signaled that the Western delusions of a sinking and ostracized Russia from global engagements due to sanctions as result of the war in Ukraine especially with the African continent had failed

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woefully. Bonesh and Devonshire-Ellis claims that despite a dip in trade in 2021, due to shipping disruption created as a result of the Ukraine conflict and Western sanctions, Russia's trade with continental Africa rebounded somewhat in 2022 to reach US\$18 billion. Unlike much of Europe, Russia has had no official colonial presence in Africa, but the Soviet Union sought warm relations and allies in Africa during the Cold War, thus seeking to establish close ties with socialist movements and governments in the continent [3].

In the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia did not have the influence and presence of the past, causing the closure of some Russian diplomatic missions in Africa in the 1990s. But in the last decade, Russia has paid more attention to the African continent, just as various African nations have begun critical reassessments of their European colonial legacy, largely with negative views. With the growing presence of powers such as China and India in Africa, Moscow sees the African continent as a significant multilateral partner in a future multipolar world order. Avoulete espoused that the recent Russia-Africa summit demonstrated Russia's clear intention to further its interests on the continent, specifically in Francophone Africa [4]. Although the number of participating countries was lower compared to the 2019 summit, the event still highlighted Russia's commitment in engaging with Africa. Russia's objectives in West Africa align with those of its allies in the region: the end of France's presence in the region and its replacement by Russia.

The waving of Russian flags during pro-coup protests and the burning of French flags recently in Niger, and previously in Mali and Burkina Faso, are just the tip of the iceberg, and Russia might use those allies as tools to fulfill its goals. Anti-French sentiment has grown out of decades of socio-economic stagnation, coupled with a feeling that their presidents are imposed upon them. France's support of questionable dynastic regimes and its dismissive attitude towards the concerns of Africans have only added to this resentment. In light of this, many Africans are turning to Russia as a more reliable ally due to its support during the decolonization era and the Western nations' inconsistent approach to international matters, such as censuring Russia for human rights abuses while overlooking similar transgressions by their allies, like Saudi Arabia.

Since this article is geared at Russian-Africa relations with a general overview of the study, only key historical epochs in these relations would be mentioned especially the economic angles. Though of recent, these relations are dominated by military cooperation as the war in Ukraine progresses, it is likely to impact this relation. Amidst this situation, this article investigates the economic impact reaped by African states stemming from Russo-African relations in the new millennium accompanied by globalization and polarization. After the background of the study comes, unique historical epochs follow, then comes next section which is the research methodology, theoretical framework, Constructivism comes in as it explains Russia-African relations. The next section of the paper which happens to be the core, looks at the economic effects on the continent and final the conclusion of Russo-Africa relation

within a decade to espoused.

## 2. Research Methodology

Before an insight of the study of Russia-Africa relations in the 21st century is unveiled, citing the process of data collection for the paper is imminent. The paper adopted a qualitative research approach where non-numerical data were gathered from secondary sources that encompasses published literature, articles, online news sites, journals, and think tanks materials.

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

Thinking about constructivism as a homogeneous approach obscures the wide range of alternative conceptions of world politics and ways of studying it that exist under this rubric. There are numerous variants of constructivism-sociological, feminist, interpretive, emancipatory, and others [5]. Following the successful importation of constructivism into International Relations (IR) by Nicholas G. Onuf, several scholars have developed constructivism as a social theory in IR by either contributing to the theory or critiquing fellow constructivists' works, in the post-Cold War era.

These intellectuals include: Alexander Wendt, Friedrich V. Kratochwil, Peter Katzenstein, Emanuel Alder, John G. Ruggie, Guzzini Stefano, and Maja Zehfuss [6-10]. Succinctly, constructivists state that real 'international relations', precisely international politics, is a social construction. 'Agents' such as sovereign states attach 'meanings' to material objects as they socially relate inter se rather than considering the actual material objects. In other words, it is from states' social relationship that their shared knowledge/understanding or the intersubjective/ideational structure originates [see Hurd; Behraves; Sterling-Folker and Badie; Cristol; Ogunnoiki and Adeyemi].

First, for constructivists, the environment surrounding states and other actors of world politics is both social and material [Checkel; Jepperson, Wendt, & Katzenstein] [11]. The social world is composed of shared ideas and knowledge, whereas the material world manifests itself in the presence of nuclear weapons, the absence of world government, and other observable manifestations of international relations. However, the material aspects of world politics do not come classified. States' foreign policies toward other states, for example, will differ depending on whether their counterparts are perceived as enemies or friends. Nuclear weapons in and of themselves are less consequential for foreign policy choices than are our perceptions of states that possess them [8, 11].

Put in another way, constructivism [the 'middle ground' between realists/neorealists/liberal Institutionalists and critical theorists/feminists/postmodernists/poststructuralists [see Alder]], is the viewpoint that "the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world" [Alder]. These interpretations are not immutable but can change from time to time. The effects of ideas penetrate deeper than states' policies and behavior. Ideational context influences the basic character of states, the so-called state identity, the

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“relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self” [8]. Actors’ identities tell them and others who they are and predispose them to embrace a particular set of interests and preferences over choices of action. An identity of great power furnishes a particular set of interests different from those implied by the identity of a European state.

At the moment, the manner in which both Russia and African states view the world is absolutely different in the economic engagements and beyond with the relations towards each other and their relations with the West. Because actors have multiple identities, constructivism does not accept the notion of fixed interests [9, 12]. For example, speculates that the international system of states can have at least three kinds of ideational contexts-Hobbesian, Lockean, or Kantian-distinguished on the basis of what kind of roles-enemy, rival, or friend-dominates the system. Each ideational context predisposes states to take a distinct position or orientation toward each other with respect to the use of violence. For Wendt, the contemporary system of states has a Lockean structure in which states assume role identities of rivals, recognize each other’s rights to life and liberty, and restrain their violence toward each other by observing the other’s right to exist.

Constructivists describe norms, beliefs, and knowledge that serve as the foundational blocks of the ideational context as intersubjective. The quality of intersubjectivity implies that meanings ascribed to social facts are not simply the aggregations of beliefs of individuals. Rather, they represent collective knowledge. This knowledge is created through dialogical relationships and interaction of actors [10]. The second premise of constructivism is that the meanings in terms of which individuals’ and states’ actions are organized arise out of interaction [8]. By doing what they do and saying what they say, individuals create intersubjective meanings, thus making the world [6]. The repetition of these processes leads to the reproduction of intersubjective meanings that over time solidify and become objective social facts that are not easy to change or transform.

In recent years, several African states have interpreted their relations with the Russian Federation as symbiotic. Contrariwise, the erstwhile U.S. National Security Adviser, Mr. John Bolton, tagged Russia’s business practices in Africa as “predatory” (Holland and Wroughton) and the French have weighed in due to anti-French sentiments on the continent. As the successor state of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has been in the good books of many African countries. In the eyes of these African polities, Russia is a traditional friend in times of need. To Russia, African states are not only its partners, but the African continent as a whole, is a ‘new’ market for its exports.

In the security interests of several African states, the Russian Federation has sold affordable military equipment to their national governments to combat Islamic extremists et alia. On the part of many African countries, they have fed the Russian economy with the much-needed natural resources and minerals. Furthermore, over a dozen African states diplomatically abstained from voting

on the UNGA resolution that censure Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, a territory of Ukraine, in the year 2014. That said, Russia has not always followed the ‘norms’ in her engagement with Africa. In recent years, Russia has meddled in the electoral process of some African countries, and covertly reached deals with the national governments of a few African states through a process that is not transparent.

## 2.2. Criticisms of Constructivism

The critics of constructivism contend that its usefulness as a guide for studying international relations is limited. Theories informed by constructivist assumptions are not parsimonious or elegant, their causality is indeterminate, and relationships are not clearly specified. Constructivists devise cumbersome models including different actors and describe complex mechanisms of influence and scope conditions that are difficult to apply beyond the situations and processes under their investigation. In the relations between Russia-Africa, non-state actors play a central role in triggering the relations between both parties thus we can not view just the state as the unique in fortifying these relations.

A constructivist idea of the mutually constitutive relationship between actors and structures has become a target of many attacks. Constructivists have been faulted for their inability to disentangle the mutually constitutive relationships and establish their temporal sequence: What comes first, a norm that affects the identity of actors or actors’ identities that influence the nature of norms? The simultaneity of interaction makes it very difficult to capture the self-reinforcing nature of norms, institutions, or cultures and the ways in which states, individuals, and other social agents create and change the social order of things.

Grounding their explanations in unobservable (intersubjective) ideational structures, constructivists have to tackle two formidable methodological challenges. First, they need to demonstrate the existence of norms, and second, they need to prove their impact on the behavior of states, just like the case under study [13]. To show the existence of shared beliefs, constructivists rely on the artifacts of actors’ interactions, such as public statements, decisions of authoritative bodies, or official memoirs. The residues of the culture and norms have also been found in international and domestic legislation. To tease out the meanings that actors ascribe to social facts and situations, constructivists have employed interpretive methods and a narrative mode of explanation (Klotz & Lynch) that have been regarded as less methodologically robust tools of research.

Another complaint about the constructivist agenda is that it has tended to be liberal idealist, concentrated on Western liberal norms of democracy, human rights, or multilateralism [14, 15]. Although constructivists have begun examining the so-called bad norms and pathological identities (Farrell; Rae), their research has overwhelmingly focused on so-called good norms. One of the implications of this selection bias is the erroneous representation of the West and Western organizations as promoters of good liberal norms that stimulate progress in international relations [13].

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Excessive emphasis on the ability of the good norms and other ideational factors to change the world and insufficient attention to material coercion and political contestation in world politics has created an image of constructivism as an approach dismissive of the role of power in the creation and dissemination of norms and ideas [16]. By ignoring or downplaying the advantages that material resources and power give to some social actors of international relations, constructivists overlook significant interrelated effects of social and material inequalities on the nature, patterns of diffusion, and ultimate success of international practices and norms. Constructivism emerged on the wave of the growing dissatisfaction with the neorealist individualistic and systemic orientation. Yet it has been conspicuously inattentive to the state-level accounts of world politics. Certainly, there are constructivists who attend more closely to domestic power constellations and culture as mediating factors in the adoption of norms or domestic sources of foreign policies and international relations (see, for example, Checkel; Hopf) [11, 17].

However, the bulk of constructivist scholarship has remained at the international level of analysis continuing to treat states as unitary actors. Constructivist scholarship has seen laudable efforts to formulate and test middle-level theories specifying the actors and mechanisms of social influence and articulating conditions under which social influence occurs. There is still an unfortunate deficit of constructivist theory building in international relations, and there is a lack of conversation among constructivists of different genres [11]. Future studies inspired by constructivist propositions need to elaborate the causal pathways and transmission mechanisms that link norms, actors, and their policy choices in various social situations. There is also room for specifying the meaning of concepts and relationships and detailing conditions under which different mechanisms of normative influence can be observed.

According to Jørgensen held that constructivism does not put forward general explanations for what individuals and states do, why societies differ, or how the world changes. Neither does it advance any claims about the content of international norms and institutions or the nature of participants of world politics [18]. “Constructivism is empty as far as assumptions, propositions, or hypotheses about international relations are concerned.” What constructivism does offer is a set of ideas about the nature of reality and the ways in which it can be grasped, and these ideas can inform people’s understanding, interpretation, and theorization about world politics. In this way, constructivism can be thought of as an approach to studying social relations or a framework of propositions that lays the basis for social theories of international relations [10].

### 2.3. Key Historical Epoch of Russia-Africa Relations

In this section of the article, I will briefly highlight those key historical aspects that cement these relations starting with the first era of Russo-Afro contact from the 15th Century. Russia’s first relations with Africa were steeped in religion—namely, Christianity. During this period, Russians and Africans came into contact as early as the 15th Century through pilgrimages to Jerusalem that inspired Russian travelers, and other Slavic

writers visiting Africa and writing about their journeys, leading to a broader knowledge of Africa in Russia (Maiga, as cited by Bassou) Egyptians (Copts) and Ethiopians (Orthodox Church) were the first Africans to become familiar to Russians. Encounters between Africans and Russians did not, however, lead to official and lasting relations between state structures (kingdoms and empires), despite occasional events including a trip to Moscow by the patriarchs of Alexandria and Sinai in 1556 to solicit the Tsar’s charity (ibid) [19, 20].

Meanwhile, Barabanov et al., held that the historical foundations of Russo-Africa are to be found as early as the Middle Ages, when Russian and African travelers met and interacted frequently on the paths of their respective Christian and Muslim piety [2]. Then came the 16th century with the famous Alexander Pushkin whose great grandfather was none other than Abraham Petrovitch Hannibal, Prince Kotoko in North Cameroon, freed and ennobled by Peter the Great. The Russian sailors and explorers then took over the discovery of the continent, before the entry into force of diplomatic relations, which were gradually established from the eighteenth century. The revolution of 1917 consolidated this historical construction thanks to the seduction operation that was set up around Africans studying in Russia. The 1922 Comintern Congress made the choice of accompanying Africa with an assumed option of defending anti-colonial and emancipation movements, which would later be affirmed with the independence struggles and, even closer to home, with an active participation in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Ogunnoiki et al. held that Russia’s relations with Africa historically goes back to the period her predecessor, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), held sway in the continent. During the Cold War [an era of Soviet expansionism, heightened tensions, ideological rivalry, and arms race between the superpowers – the U.S. and USSR], the Soviet Union, which has a non-colonial power profile in Africa, seized the opportunity of independence struggles against European colonial powers, the exit of Portugal from Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique following the 1974 Carnation Revolution, intra and inter-African state conflicts e.g., Angolan Civil War (1975), Ethiopia-Somalia ‘Ogaden War’ (1977-1978), and the opposition to white minority rule and racism in Southern Africa, to make inroads into Africa (see Brayton; Bienen; Matusevich).

The post-war engagement of the former Soviet Union in Africa started in the mid-1950s with the Bandung Conference of (1955) with the Non-Aligned Movement. The Soviet approach of counter-imperialism ‘was the official ideology that emerged during the second half of the 1960s [21]. However, in reality, Moscow’s Africa policy was a mixture of ideology and realpolitik that had been shaped by the geopolitical rivalry of the USSR in times of the Cold War up to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Matusevich as cited by Kohnert) [22]. Russia and most African leaders shared a common vision of anti-colonialism, ‘modernization’ and nation-building, stimulated by not just the Russian interest in Africa’s resources and markets. (Kohnert). Immediate after the independence of former colonial African

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states in the early 1960s, and continuing during the cold war, students from almost all African countries, whether 'socialist' or 'capitalist' orientated, studied in the USSR.

Following a prolonged period of waning Russian influence in Africa, in the wake of the collapse of the Union of Soviet Social Republics (USSR) in 1991, there has been a concerted push toward political and economic re-engagement, which became particularly pronounced throughout the 2010s. These efforts have often been anchored within a handful of selected African countries and within a few key areas of cooperation relating to arms, energy, military cooperation and expanding trade networks. Russia's political and economic footprint has, however, remained fairly marginal across the continent, when compared to African states' other major international partners. These include China, the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), the European Union (EU), individual EU member states, and, increasingly, other emerging powers including India, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar (Singh).

Since post-Soviet Russia turned its attention to Africa in the early twenty-first century, the scope of cooperation between Moscow and African countries has expanded to include a range of areas. From mining to arms supply, nuclear technology, agriculture, and fertilizers, Moscow signed a multitude of treaties and agreements in an apparent desire to catch up with other powers. Following its policy of 'counter-imperialism', the Kremlin was opportunistic enough to cooperate with a wide range of countries, ranging from the most 'progressive' to the most 'reactionary'. In West Africa, this comprised for example next to Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal also the Ivory Coast and Nigeria, the second biggest African economy, besides South Africa, where Moscow backed the ANC during the anti-apartheid struggle (Legvold).

With the end of the Cold War, Russia has progressively moved from an ideological approach to a pragmatic economic approach, with the search for raw materials in mind, but above all the development of business in the continent. In this logic, it has called upon a myriad of sprawling state enterprises [Gazprom, Lukoil, Rosatom, Sukhoi, etc.] supported by two powerful financing organizations that accompany their conquest of the continent [Vnesheconombank and Eximbank], as well as gigantic private enterprises [Kaspersky, Rusal, Evraz, etc.] that participate in a form of economic diplomacy supported by dedicated banks [Sberbank, Gemcorp, etc.]. At the same time, and in a spirit of equality, Russia favours solidarity contracts [which link trade, energy, and security], barter contracts, joint venture contracts, etc., which have the virtue of removing any feeling of inferiority from the relationship. In the end, although the level of trade with Africa is still low, it is growing exponentially [400% between 2010 and 2018!] [2].

In the period that follows, Russian President Vladimir Putin's first visit to the African continent in 2006, relations between Russia and African states taking a novel frontier considerably. Bassou held that in his first term in office, Putin paid little attention to Africa, as he was mostly focused on restoring the Russian state, and then on actions in his immediate vicinity, such as Chechnya,

Georgia, and other surrounding states. It was not until September 2006 that President Putin undertook a mini tour of Africa, which took him first to South Africa and then to Morocco [20]. This mini tour was followed by Putin successor Dmitry Medvedev's trip to Angola, Namibia, and Nigeria in 2009.

Since 2014, Russian involvement in Africa has grown significantly. African leaders have been receptive to these overtures as a result of increasing concerns about growing Chinese dominance, retrenchment of the United States (US) and their interest in diversifying trading and security partners. Russia cultivates these relationships by relying on the legacy of the Soviet Union's support for anti-colonial and liberation movements, and focuses on strengthening diplomatic, military and economic collaborations. Russia remains a relatively minor economic and political player on the continent, and European Union (EU) and US concerns that Russian expansion in Africa draws the continent into a broader geopolitical struggle between great powers are overstated [23]. Kohnert stated that, in the decade after the collapse of the Soviet empire Russian involvement in Africa grew significantly again since 2014. Moscow's strategy concentrated on a mix of arms sales, political support, notably of authoritarian regimes, and security cooperation in exchange for mining rights, market access and diplomatic support for its foreign policy. Russia became the largest arms supplier to Africa.

Russia has diplomatic relations with all 54 African countries, and has embassies in 49 of them. Much has been said about the 2019 Sochi Summit, forgetting the first Russian-African business forum organized in 2011 by the "special representative for cooperation with Africa," a permanent position that reports directly to the presidency. Russia is developing a political and operational discourse based on principles that appeal to Africa: global democratization, independence and non-interference that rejects "Western style conditionalities", diplomatic presence in the countries but also within African regional organizations, permanent reminder of its absence in colonization and at the Berlin Conference, health support, strong media presence with Russia Today and Sputnik, but also protection of Africa in UN bodies through its right of veto (Barabanov et al., 2023: 51). While summit formats with Africa are plentiful, not all have culminated to economic independence of the continent. Economic submits like the China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), for example, has been held every three years since 2000.

The same can be said for the European Union-African Union Summit, which was also launched in 2000 and has been held 6 times since then. Japan's format, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), goes even further back, having taken place 8 times since 1993 with varying gaps between the events. Others have been launched more recently, such as the India-Africa Forum Summit, which was launched in 2008, as well as the Turkey-Africa Partnership Summit cemented in the Turkiye-Africa Business and Economic Forum, which was launched in the same year. Against this background, the Russia-Africa Summits are in the same footing or may vary in content.

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The first Russia-Africa summit held in Sochi in October 2019 was a landmark event for Russia and Africa alike. Russia used the summit to officially declare its plans to build partner-like, long-term and mutually beneficial relations with African countries. It was decided to hold highest level events once every three years. Relying, since the days of the Soviet Union, on friendship and mutual assistance and tested by time and even the total absence of interest in interacting with the African continent over the past at least 15 or even 20 years, Russian-African relations needed a sweeping reset. The continent is growing at a breath-taking pace and is interested both in political and economic relations. Mindful of the past, the African countries are doing their best to diversify post-colonial and neo-colonial relations by expanding the gamut of external players, among which Russia has a special place. Russia and Africa have always trusted each other. A major sovereign power rich in energy and resources, Russia was an attractive partner for Africa which believed that once it fixes its domestic economy, it will turn to Africa and start investing in the projects that would build the “Africa of the future” [2].

The 2019 summit was supposed to start a new era in Russia-Africa cooperation. The Africans were anticipating the investment to come to all sectors of the economy. But most Russian companies are still in the dark about how to build work with Africa. They are unaware of the entry points or the potential partners. They are not sure what the African countries really need, how to establish communication or to build financial models; how to ensure transaction compliance or to address differences in legislation and legal regulations between our countries and the like. The 2019 Sochi summit adopted a joint declaration consisting of 47 items, 20 of which are directly or indirectly related to cooperation in trade, economic, educational and humanitarian spheres. Each of these declared intentions was to be implemented in practice and filled with concrete projects such as meaningful and tangible increase in trade, a roadmap for joint projects in a variety of economic sectors with subsequent implementation of each phase, and wide-scale cooperation in creating joint projects to protect the environment.

Clifford held that the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi, co-hosted by the Russian President Vladimir Putin and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the first of its kind and attended by 43 African heads of state, confirmed this policy [24]. It led to several treaties, including between Moscow and the African Union. Concurring to this Paczyńska stated that the first Russia-Africa Summit, held in Sochi in October 2019, reflected the growing importance of this new relationship [23]. It focused on strengthening political, commercial and security ties, with US\$ 12.5 billion of memoranda signed in natural resource exploitation, nuclear energy and military cooperation. Since post-Soviet Russia turned its attention to Africa in the early twenty-first century, the scope of cooperation between Moscow and African countries has expanded to include a range of areas. From mining to arms supply, nuclear technology, agriculture, and fertilizers, Moscow signed a multitude of treaties and agreements in an apparent desire to catch up with other powers [20].

Today, the Russian Federation, unlike the Soviet Union that was bent on spreading Marxism-Leninism in Africa and elsewhere, is consolidating its relations with former pro-Soviet African countries as well as establishing relations with other African states based on national interests Ogunnoiki et al. Despite Russia’s war with Ukraine, President Putin remains keen on maintaining and strengthening relations with Africa, and this planned summit is a follow-up, four years later, to the October 2019 meeting in Sochi attended by a multitude of African leaders. Russia’s determination to hold the Summit with African countries—amid its ongoing war in Ukraine and difficulties imposed on Moscow by Western sanctions—is either: the result of Africa’s importance to Russian foreign policy and, therefore, the meeting with African leaders must take place, regardless of conditions; because Russia needs African states to counter Western attempts to isolate it on the international stage; or because Russia seeks to show that its war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed by the West do not impact the normal operations of the Russian state, which continues to hold normal relations with the rest of the world, including Africa.

According to Sidiropoulos and Alden, the Russian forays into Africa are also coming against the backdrop of rapidly evolving and uncertain geopolitics and a concerted reframing of Russia’s role as a responsible member of the international family of nations [25]. In order to live up to its image of a ‘great power’, Russia needs supporters. African states, which are disillusioned with the current world order and rules of the game, make useful partners. In turn, African states appreciate that Russian help, trade and infrastructure projects come without political conditionalities and ideological baggage often associated with the West. With a rift opening between the US and its traditional allies through its ‘America First’ approach, including wanting its allies to pay more for their own security, the emergent trade war between the US and China, and finally, a schism in the European project, Russia has been able to exploit these divisions.

In a recent telephone conversation, Russian President Vladimir Putin officially invited Assimi Goïta, the military chief of the transition in Mali, to take part in the second Russia-Africa summit that took place in Saint Petersburg. This summit was scheduled for July 2023, according to Mikhail Bogdanov, the Special Representative of the President of Russia to the Middle East and Africa and Deputy Foreign Minister. Russia is openly optimistic that several African leaders will attend the planned summit, according to Russian Ambassador-at-Large Oleg Ozerov: “Russia expects that most African leaders will attend the Russia-Africa summit in 2023 ... We are getting positive responses. I think most African heads of state will be at the forum” [20]. Unfortunately, just 20 African statesmen attended indicating a drastic fall as compared to the previous one in 2019. With the exception of North African states with the likes of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria etc., South Africa are strategically the most important country for Russia on the continent, although the decision by the new South African administration not to continue with the Russian nuclear energy deal has created some uncertainties in the relationship [25].

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Barabanov et al., held that Russia is an experienced player on the global energy market with a proven track record in developing, building, operating and assessing energy facilities, such as TPPs, HPPs, NPPs and the like, and export and transport of energy [2]. The implementation of energy programmes on vast territories and the construction of power grids, which are what Africa needs most, constitute Russia's competitive edge when it comes to choosing a partner. Africa can become a joint testing and development site for Russia's latest innovative technology in this and other sectors. At this junction, African countries do not have sophisticated technological expertise of their own, but, as economies with dynamically expanding populations and capacities, are powerful consumers of the latest technological products. African governments have a stake in gaining access to innovative technology, developing IT and telecom infrastructure, as well as to knowledge-intensive technology. Now on a course of upgrading and developing these areas, Russia may become one of Africa's key partners, thanks in part to the reasonable cost of such products and services compared to the Western counterparts, and Africans' continuing trust in Russian-made products.

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#### **2.4. The Economic Effects of Russo-Afro Relations on Africans**

Bonesh and Devonshire-Ellis held that in the Russian geopolitical mindset, Africa now has an enhanced and more vital position, requiring increasing cooperation and the strengthening of diplomatic relations, trade, and investment [3]. This is especially pertinent due to Russia now looking beyond Europe's southern coastline to develop alternative trade and services ties that bypass the EU altogether. This immediately extends to food supplies, industrial production, developing exports, and the tourism industry amongst others.

Meanwhile, Barabanov et al., held that if we were to conduct a detailed audit of Russian business in Africa over the past four years, we would see that the companies that have been operating there for at least 10 years are still active and enjoy relative success in Africa [2]. But they have not become the engines or drivers behind the new wave, either. The projects that are being announced from time to time in the run-up to the second Russia-Africa Summit are nothing but random specks and half-hearted attempts to integrate into the current economic circumstances

in an attempt to develop new markets. With the pivot towards the South it announced, Russia now needs its own unparalleled mechanisms, as well as an all-purpose toolkit for building a Russia-Africa economic policy.

There are extremely concrete processes out there that could be used as important footholds when accessing African markets. Continental Africa's free trade area, now in a state of infancy in terms of regulations and functioning, could serve as a good platform for joint economic projects given Russia's extensive experience in models of that kind. With the Africans' interests and goals in mind, Russia could provide substantial help in promoting a strategic approach to Africa's economic growth. Interaction with the continent cannot rely exclusively on individual projects. It is important to work closely with the central, continental and sub-regional pan-African organizations in order to expand the range of one-time cooperation and ensure a multilateral approach to exploring opportunities (ibid). In explaining the economic effects that this relation has on the African continent, I shall uniquely on those pressing economic needs that the continent derives from Moscow.

#### **2.5. Agriculture and Food Supplies**

The African continent is experiencing rapid population growth, and many countries in Africa depend on the import of food products. Russia has been the largest supplier of wheat, corn, rapeseed, and sunflower oil, and many African countries have been virtually dependent on Russian wheat reserves for years. After Russia's withdrawal from the "Black Sea Grains Initiative", many in Africa see Russia as a guarantor of their food security and expect it to be a supplier of strategically important commodities to their growing markets. In fact, while the food security of Africa is threatened, Moscow is paying attention to the uninterrupted supply of food for Africa and the supply of wheat, barley, corn, and other products to African countries [3].

In this regard, in 2022, Russia exported 11.5 million tons of grain to Africa and delivered almost 10 million tons in the first half of 2023. Moscow is trying to make up for the deficiency of Ukrainian grain and provide special opportunities for Russian companies by providing mineral fertilizers and transferring modern agricultural technologies to Africa. Almost 30% of Africa's imports from Russia are wheat and grains, which are bought by the most populous countries on the continent, such as Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, and Sudan. Moscow also intends to help develop transport and logistics infrastructure and corridors, food warehouses, training of specialists, promotion of health technologies, and so on in this area. At the 2023 St. Petersburg summit, Vladimir Putin has announced that Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somali, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea will each receive 25,000 to 50,000 tons of grain, with Moscow also covering the delivery costs of the shipments (ibid).

#### **2.6. Trade and Investment**

Russian trade and investment in Africa have grown significantly, particularly in the Maghreb, Egypt and Sudan [23]. One reason was the growing attractiveness of the African gas and oil markets

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for Russian corporations such as Rosneft, Gazprom, Lukoil, not just as an opportunity to increase production and impact on the global gas market, but also to influence pricing and market conditions of other countries (Shakhovskaya & Timonina). This, the more so, regarding the Western oil and gas import embargo as a reaction of the US and the EU to Putin's war in Ukraine. In this respect, the repeated suggestion of Western politicians and media that the EU and its member states should expand African gas imports, including Nigeria, Egypt, Mozambique, Tanzania and Ghana (Fox; Whitehouse) proved to be a mixed blessing (Kohnert) [26].

In total, Russian investment amounts to less than 1 percent of foreign direct investment into Africa, much smaller than investments from Europe, North America, and Asian countries. In 2019, Russian foreign direct investment was less than one-sixth that of the biggest investor, the Netherlands, and only 20 percent of what China had invested in the continent in the same year. It was also significantly less than what South Africa and Mauritius had invested on the continent. Like most of these other countries, Russia has concentrated its investment almost wholly on resources and energy extraction (Stronski as cited by Gopaldas) [1].

Trade between Russia and Africa doubled since 2015, to about \$20 billion a year in 2021 according to the African Export-Import Bank President Benedict Oramah. Russia exported \$14 billion worth of goods and services and imported roughly \$5 billion in African products. For example, Rusal a company that excavates Bauxite, the source of aluminum, in Guinea nuclear group Rosatom mines uranium in Namibia. Alrosa, the world's largest diamond and mining company, was trying to expand operations in Angola and Zimbabwe, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Guensburg as cited by Kohnert).

Nyabiage held that in 2020, Russia-Africa trade reached \$14 billion, about 2 percent of the continent's total trade, piling in comparison to larger trading partners like China, France, India, and the United States [27]. Moreover, the trade relationship is wholly asymmetric. Russia exported \$12.4 billion in goods and services to the continent, while importing just \$1.63 billion, leaving Africa with a near \$11 billion trade deficit. Almost a full 30 percent of Africa's imports from Russia are wheat and cereals, bought by countries like Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, and Sudan. Minerals such as fuels, chemicals, and gas account for another 20 percent of Russia's exports to the continent. For its part, Africa exports predominantly agricultural products to Russia [1].

### 2.7. Infrastructure and Logistics

Since infrastructural development is key in assessing the economic development of this relation just as other relations between Africa states and the rest of her partners. Weighing in on this, Bonesh and Devonshire-Ellis earmarked with over 330 major infrastructure and industrial facilities in Africa, Moscow has a significant historical contribution in the region [3]. However, recent Russian investment is less than 1% of

Africa's total foreign direct investment and significantly less than European, American, and Asian competitors. Moscow is seriously looking into this so that it matches those of her rivalries rather than focusing and dominating military supplies. Russia has focused most of its investment on resources and energy; and has invested in big ticket investment projects [a huge US\$20 billion power plant in Egypt being just one example].

Moscow pays special attention to improving the efficiency of the supply chain and logistics through traditional methods [developing sea and land trade routes, investing in infrastructure and ports, and establishing direct flights], searching for innovative and digital solutions related to the creation of new transport and logistics chains. Creating a more efficient system of logistics and passenger and cargo transportation has a significant impact on the development of cooperation. Therefore, it is possible for East Africa countries such as Egypt to join the North-South International Transport Corridor (INSTC) project. That feeds directly into the Persian Gulf, heads north via Iran to the Caspian Sea and to markets in Russia, Turkiye, and Central Asia. Coordinating east African ports and logistics to the INSTC will be a major development area [3].

### 2.8. Mining and Energy

In the domain of mining, Russian companies provide beneficial business and technological capabilities in several key African industries, such as advanced technologies and geological exploration. The expansion of Russia's operation and the extraction of minerals and resources from Angola, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Sudan and Zimbabwe, South Africa, have all expanded, while Moscow has gained mineral concessions [such as oil, gold, diamonds, bauxite, lithium, and chromium]. Russia also imports minerals from Africa [3]. Since Russia is a great player in the energy sector, Most African countries intend to use all available efficient energy sources. A key Russian strategic focus in Africa is on energy, with energy diplomacy an effective tool for Russia in African countries.

Russia's key investments in Africa are in the oil, gas, and nuclear energy sectors. Several Russian companies, such as Gazprom, Lukoil, Rostec, and Rosatom are active in Africa. Activity is also evident in Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Nigeria, Uganda, Libya, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire. Russia's Rosatom has signed nuclear cooperation agreements with eighteen countries [a third of the African continent], including Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, and Zambia. In addition, Moscow has participated in many infrastructure projects, and in particular, the equipment and construction of hydroelectric power plants in several countries in east Africa. It should also be noted that Africa also buys mineral fuels such as coal, oil products, and gas from Russia, accounting for 18.3% of total imports from Russia. Recently, Russia increased its gasoline exports and sent shipments directly to Africa. Africa and countries such as Nigeria have imported an unprecedented amount of Russian gasoline [3].

### 3. Conclusion

The fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s culminated to the



breakdown of communication with the continent for over 30 years was a minus for Moscow. The vacuum left by Moscow was imminent filled by other global powers hence shutting down Russia's economic/trade, socio-cultural missions, and a significant reduction of political and diplomatic relations with the continent. Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, South Africa and Nigeria most especially enjoy closer ties with the Russian Federation, while within the past decade and recently Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Angola among other African states have joined in fortifying ties with Moscow as noted in their participation in the different summits and economic programs heralded by Moscow.

From this article, early Russo-Africa ties started in the 15th Century and has metamorphosed recently with the holding of the 2019 and 2023 Russia-Africa Summit. The economic benefits reaped by African states are in the domain of trade and investments, agriculture and food supplies/grains, infrastructure and logistics and finally energy and mining. The strengthening of economic ties is hampered by the sanctions on Russia imposed by the West as a result of "Russian Special Military Operation" in Ukraine as spelled out by the Russian Federation hence leading to forceful re-allocation of resources by Moscow to take care of her backyard. The fortification of Russo-Afro schemes, enhancing bilateral intergovernmental commissions, and the broadening of network of Russian Embassies and Commercial agencies in the continent are unique instruments in catapulting economic relations to the highest level in future, but Western states may be against it. The recent expansion of BRICS with the inclusion of some African States is an indication that Russia's deepening ties with the continent will be strengthened [28-30].

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