

The Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on the Orientations of Russian Foreign Policy toward Africa (2014–2022)

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Abstract:

The Russian foreign policy has experienced radical changes both regionally and internationally since 2014. The series of events, including the conflict over the Crimea and the subsequent growth of the Russo-Ukrainian War in 2022, were the key elements in reshaping Russia's priorities. The annexation of the Crimean Peninsula to the Russia became a watershed in the relations between Russia and the West. Extensive economic and political sanctions were imposed on Russia with the aim of constraining its room for maneuver on the international stage. This prompted Russia to seek new avenues to strengthen its international standing and expand its network of partnerships. As a result, the Africa took a prominent role in Russia's efforts to find equilibrium between the pressures from other countries and to play its part in the multipolarization of the international order.

Keywords: Russia, Crimean Crisis, Africa, Russo-Ukrainian War, Economic Sanctions, Foreign Policy.

Introduction:

The Ukrainian crisis has brought a chief alteration in the intercontinental priorities of Russian foreign policy in 2014. Growing tensions with the West resulted in the imposition of economic and political sanctions on Russia, prompting it to seek new arenas to strengthen its presence on the international stage and to establish partnerships with non-Western actors. As a result, Africa found itself a prominent role in Russian foreign policy, especially after the Russian Foreign Policy Concept of 2016 which adopted a more flexible stance towards the African states. This approach was reflected in the diversification of areas of cooperation with African countries through investments in the energy, mining, and security sectors, in addition to strengthening Russia's diplomatic and military presence in strategically important regions across the continent.

Significance of the Study:

The significance of this research embeds in examining the impact of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis on the orientations of Russian foreign policy in strengthening its presence in Africa. It also seeks to identify the repercussions of this crisis on Russia's political, military, economic, and diplomatic efforts to enhance its influence across the African continent.

Objective of the Study:

This research aims to analyze the impact of the Ukrainian crisis since 2014 on Russia's orientations toward Africa by exploring the strategic transformations adopted in its foreign policy and identifying the motives behind this shift in light of the exacerbation of its relations with the West. It also seeks to evaluate the instruments of influence employed by Russia to reinforce its political, economic, military, and diplomatic presence on the continent.

Problem of the Study:

The problem of this research is: In the midst of the Ukraine crisis and the tensions that were created in the relations between Russia and the West, how has the Russians been able to deal with the crisis and to expand its influence in the African countries as an important space for the re-assertion and expansion of its international influence?

Hypothesis of the Study:

The study assumes that the stronger the pressure from the West against the Russian Federation after the Ukrainian crisis, the stronger the Russian Federation is oriented towards strengthening its influence in the African countries. This is due to the Russian government's attempts to offset foreign isolation and to regain its place in the international system.

Methodology:

The method used in this study is descriptive-analytical method, which is data collection and data analysis. It is used to analyse and understand the nature of Russia's foreign policy in Africa since 2014 in the context of the ongoing effect of the Ukrainian crisis.

Section One: The Political and Diplomatic Repercussions of the Ukrainian Crisis in Enhancing Russian Influence in Africa

The question of the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula is an important step towards restoring the territories that are part of the country's national strategy (Al-Barrak, n.d.). Ukraine, under the Russian geopolitical paradigm, lies in a fundamental position because of the security relevance it has to Russia. In this context, according to Latif (2022), in 2012, Russian President Vladimir Putin published an article in the official Internet site of the Kremlin on the official site of the Russian state, in which he stated that "the formation of a government hostile to Russia on Ukrainian territory would become the use of a weapon of mass destruction against Russians", and that Russia and Ukraine are "one entity and one people".

Besides, Ukraine is a national security issue for Russia. This is because it gives Russia the ability to further extend its political, economic and military reach into Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea region. This is one of the main goals of the Russia, who considers Ukraine as a part of its "sphere of influence. (Research Group, 2022)

Ukraine is also of geostrategic importance for the Russia because of its geographical position which overlooks the Black Sea that gives to Ukraine exceptional importance for Russia. Russian access to the Black Sea allows it to access the Mediterranean Sea, which is important to Russian trade and for energy flows to the Mediterranean region (Radi and Ali). Therefore, the seizure of Sevastopol Naval Base and control of the Crimean Peninsula is a critical strategic need of Russia. This control enables great flexibility in maritime strategic maneuver, promotes Russia's strategic deployment and transfer of forces to regions of Russian influence, and further enhances its expansionist power and geopolitical presence in the region, making this region a key core in Russia's security agenda and regional interests (Hadi, 2024).

In 2014, in response to the events in Ukraine, the West has imposed a series of economic sanctions on the Russia, aimed at reducing the ability of Russia to expand its influence abroad. In addition to the serious harm these sanctions did to the energy industry, the general impact on the Russian economy was also apparent, with investment falling and the national currency's value weakening. This led to a standstill or delay in development of the oil and gas fields, especially those on the northern Russian continental shelf. This led to Russia changing its foreign policy strategy by seeking alliances with non-Western states, driven by a loss of trust in its traditional partnerships with European countries (Lama, 2023).

Consequently, this created tensions and disagreements among Russia and the West, especially since Russia's military involvement in Syria in 2015 was mainly to support the regime of Bashar al-Assad and to secure the regime's survival (Thgeel & Abed, 2022). Therefore, the continuation of these tensions made the Africa a field for geopolitical rivalry between Russia and the West. This development encouraged Russia to step into Africa's affairs, portraying itself as a reliable partner and at the same time promoting a more prominent African presence in a multipolar international order (Ramani, 2023). Needless to say, Africa emerged as an acceptable strategic option for Russia, especially following the setbacks at the global level. As the influence of the West waned, so did Russian interest in the continent, with both an increase in political and social turmoil in the region and a shift in interest.

Accordingly, Russia sought to expand its presence in numerous African states, taking advantage of every available opportunity, whether through the provision of financial assistance, political support, or arms sales. These efforts enabled Russia to open new avenues for investing in Africa's natural resources, while also gaining new markets for the promotion of its military and agricultural products across the continent (Vuksanović, 2023).

As noted earlier, Russia began to expand its external relations with African countries from 2014 onward, capitalizing on the developments associated with the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. Moscow charted an independent course free from the conditions and constraints imposed by Western states and institutions through international aid and assistance. Russia also focused on several levels in order to strengthen its influence in African countries.

First: The Political Level

The Russia sought, through intensifying its activities on the Africa, to play a prominent and influential role on the continent, despite the decline of Russian influence in Africa during the period following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, Russia's movements adopted an increasingly active approach after annexing the Crimean Peninsula, which constitutes a clear indication of the growing Russian influence across all sectors in Africa. This development occurred within the framework of implementing a policy based on investing in the historical ties linking Russia with African states. In this context, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that relations with African states constitute one of the priorities of Russian foreign policy, reflecting Russia's desire to bolster its presence in order to confront the challenges it faces (Muhi Al-Din, 2021). Among the principal political motives behind Russia's efforts to enhance its presence in Africa following the Crimean crisis are the following:

1. Attempting to Break International Isolation:

Africa represents an important avenue through which Russia seeks to achieve the aims of its foreign policy. The recent Russian interest in Africa is also associated with the attempt to face off the international isolation of Russia as a result of the Crimean Peninsula's annexation and further escalation of policies aimed at it by the Western alliance. In this context, Russia moved to establish alliance-based relations with African states in order to strengthen its position on both the regional and international levels, in addition to benefiting from the political and diplomatic support that these countries can provide in international forums (Rashwan, n.d.). In the United Nations General Assembly vote on the resolution condemning Russia, 29 African states voted against the resolution, while 6 states abstained, reflecting positive voting patterns that underscore the importance of the African continent in Russian foreign policy (Ramani, n.d.).

This orientation is attributable to the deterioration of Russia's relations with the West following these events, as Western powers imposed numerous sanctions aimed at containing Russia and preventing it from expanding its influence and control in the region. Within this context, Russia began to reorient its strategy toward the Middle East and the Africa to establish new partnerships (Al-Harabi, 2024).

Accordingly, the Africa came to occupy an increasingly important position in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russia signed by President Vladimir Putin in 2016, after having ranked ninth among the regions considered most significant to Russian interests under the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept. The 2016 document

stated that “Russia will continue to expand its relations with the countries of the continent in all fields, whether at the bilateral or multilateral level, through the enhancement of political dialogue and the intensification of comprehensive cooperation in the economic, commercial, military, and security spheres, in addition to strengthening its ties with the African Union, which constitutes an important component of Russia’s foreign policy toward Africa”(Askar, 2025).

Russia also seeks, through its presence in Africa, to balance regional and international powers on the continent. In addition, Russia’s participation in African peacekeeping operations has contributed to strengthening its relations with African military forces. Arms sales have likewise opened the door to the development of broader political relationships. Russia believes that by deepening its ties with African states, it will be able to create effective instruments of pressure against Western powers, particularly European countries, by challenging their traditional influence in Africa and increasing the military and economic burdens resulting from Russian interventions. Furthermore, this strategy may contribute to increased flows of irregular migration. This approach is intended to weaken the positions of states supporting Ukraine, while at the same time providing Russia with leverage that it can use as a bargaining tool in other issues of strategic importance within its near abroad (Dahshan, n.d.).

2. Acquiring New Allies:

Russia has sought to acquire new allies in Africa. Brittany Brown, who served as Director for African Affairs at the United States National Security Council, explained that Russia increased its interest in African countries because of the opportunities they provide for generating greater investment returns, as well as their voting patterns against Western resolutions related to African affairs in the United Nations. Michelle Gavin, who served as the United States Ambassador to Botswana from 2011 to 2014, also noted that Russia was working specifically to undermine U.S. sanctions policies imposed on certain African states, particularly Central African Republic and South Sudan, as a response to the economic sanctions imposed upon Russia (Ramani, n.d.).

Both Russia and China acted to block a statement issued by the United Nations Security Council concerning sanctions against the President of Burundi following the outbreak of internal unrest in 2015. Consequently, media outlets supportive of the Burundian government praised Russia’s stance in confronting what they considered interference in domestic affairs by US and France. Burundi has also announced its desire to broaden its relations with Russia in the Great Lakes region of Africa. At the same time, Russia strengthened its relations with Namibia due to its strategic location along the Atlantic Ocean, making it an important gateway for Russia’s expansion toward West Africa (Ramani, n.d.).

Despite the extreme and ongoing competition among Russia and the United States on the Africa, Moscow sought to capitalize on the decline of American engagement in the territory, particularly during the presidency of Donald Trump beginning in 2017, when the primary U.S. priority shifted toward countering the rise of China as a global power within the international system. In this context, Russia moved to expand its influence and intensify its media activities directed against Western powers. Russia completed many treaties with African nations, such as Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Nigeria, Mozambique, Namibia, Chad, Niger and the Central African Republic. These were agreements of political and military assistance .

Balancing Western Influence:

The Africa has become an arena of international competition, particularly in light of the clash between the interests of certain traditional powers and those of emerging powers on the continent. This is due not only to Africa’s abundant natural resources, but also to the strategic rivalry between the United States and China. China launched the Belt and Road Initiative, through which it seeks to transport Chinese goods to the European Union and other countries. In addition, China established a military base in Djibouti in 2017, thereby intensifying competition among the major powers. This development has been viewed as a strategic challenge both to US and its allies, and to the Russia (Clifford & Gruz, 2022).

Russia began expanding its presence in Africa by drawing upon its historical aid for anti-colonial liberation movements, a legacy that has strengthened mutual trust between the two sides. Through this approach, Russia has sought to reduce the impact of other critical powers on the continent, especially that of US. Every advance achieved by Russia in Africa is regarded as a corresponding reduction in the presence of competing powers in the region (Taiwo & Ademuyiwa, 2024). Since 2018, Russia has undertaken several interventions in African states to advance its strategic objectives, including the establishment of spheres of influence parallel to those of the dominant powers already present in the region. In Guinea and the Central African Republic, Russia has succeeded in consolidating its presence by providing international protection to its allies, in addition to signing agreements for the exploration of important natural resources in those countries (Ramani, n.d.).

In 2020 and 2021, Russia capitalized on the deteriorating security conditions in West Africa following the failure of Western forces, particularly those of the United States and France, to combat terrorist organizations. These circumstances provided Russia with a significant opportunity to demonstrate its capacity to deliver the support necessary to ensure the national defense of several countries in the region through the provision of security, military, and political assistance (Matthew and et al. 2024). A number of factors helped in consolidating the Russian presence on the continent, especially in West Africa and Central Africa (Bichev et al., 2023):

- a. The decline of Western influence: The weakening of Western influence in West and Central Africa created an opening for Russia to expand its involvement in the countries of the region.
- b. The reduction or withdrawal of certain American forces from their bases in late 2018.
- c. The preference among many Africans for the presence of Russian forces over Western forces on their territory. They perceive Russia as a more credible partner than the Western powers. As a result, Russia succeeded in establishing a firm foothold in Africa.

Second: The Diplomatic Level

Russian diplomacy witnessed significant development on the Africa after 2014, primarily as a result of Russia's efforts to counter Western attempts to isolate it following the Annexation of Crimea by Russia. In this context, Russia skillfully employed its soft power to strengthen its presence on the continent, presenting itself as a reliable partner and an alternative to the traditional Western powers (Jaafer and Salih, 2022).

Russia's strategy was to respect the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs. Cooperation founded on mutual interests gained broad acceptance among African countries, particularly in light of growing dissatisfaction with the Western presence on the continent. Among the most important diplomatic instruments employed by Russia in Africa are the following:

1. Summit Conferences:

The Russia–Africa Summit on Oct 23–24, 2019 in Sochi under the motto “For Peace, Security, and Development” was also part of Russia's efforts to regain its position and historical role in Africa. The summit enabled Russia to establish a forum for coordinating its diplomatic efforts with African states and marked a transition in cooperation from the bilateral to the multilateral level. It was also a reflection of the competition between the great powers for influence and prestige on the continent and summit diplomacy was one of the key tools used to reach these goals (Al-Kambash, 2019).

Official representatives from all 54 African countries participated in the summit, including states from West Africa such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Benin, Ghana, Senegal, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire. The summit was also attended by the heads of eight regional African organizations: the African Union, the African Export-Import Bank, the East African Community, the G5 Sahel, the Arab Maghreb Union, the Southern African Development Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, and the Economic Community of West African States .

2. Cultural Diplomatic Instruments:

The instruments employed by Russia in Africa have been diverse and have extended beyond economic and military dimensions, security assistance, and official visits to include cultural initiatives. These initiatives have involved the upgrade of the Russian language, as well as the establishment of Russian Houses to strengthen cultural exchange with African peoples.

a. Russian Houses:

Russian Houses represent one of the principal instruments of Russian soft power used to enhance cultural and linguistic relations in many parts of the world, including Africa. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on September 5, 2022, released a new document titled "Concept of the Humanitarian Policy of Russia Abroad," which demonstrated Russia's leaning towards cultural and humanitarian means of exerting political influence. The same year, the Ministry created a special department to coordinate the policy of the Russian government in the field of soft power tools in science, the arts, education and sports. As part of this activity, the agency made itself known through the creation of many Russian Houses in different African countries with the goal of cultivating a positive image and therefore a positive attitude for Russia, after what it perceived as negative actions of the Western countries in the wake of Russia annexation of Crimea and the Russo-Ukrainian War, considered by the international community as a violation of the sovereignty of the countries concerned and of international law (Future Center for Research and Advanced Studies, 2022).

Such institutions have gained a lot of significance in the attraction of public opinion, university students and other social groups. Russian Houses serve as platforms for cultural and educational cooperation, providing the opportunity to learn the Russian language, and hosting a variety of educational, cultural and sporting events. At the same time, they serve as civilizational bridges between Russia and African countries (Тункара, 2025).

b. Promotion of the Russian Language:

Russia has made significant efforts to promote its national language across the Africa, following the example of other major powers, through agreements related to cooperation in education, pedagogy, and cultural exchange. The Central African Republic became the first African state to adopt Russian as an official language of instruction in the country's universities in 2018, pursuant to a decree signed by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra (Rawabet Center for Research and Strategic Studies, 2024). In addition, the African Russophone Organization was established in August 2021 in the Central African Republic. This organization oversees a network of relationships and partnerships aimed at promoting the Russian language and culture and linking African cultural and university institutions with their Russian counterparts (Al-Subaitli, 2023).

Russia has also sought to further expand the dissemination of its language throughout the continent, particularly in West Africa, where this effort is expected to deepen cooperation with the countries of the region. In Nigeria, Russian became the third most widely taught European language after French and German in 2022. The Russian ambassador signed an agreement with the University of Lagos to establish a Russian cultural center at the university (Авдалян, 2023).

3. Digital Diplomacy:

Russia stepped up its international broadcasting and digital diplomacy thrusts, especially towards Africa, where a positive image on TV screens and internet is regarded as an essential part of a successful public diplomacy campaign. When the image conveyed through international media does not serve a country's interests, that country faces considerable difficulty in gaining the trust of foreign audiences, a prerequisite for strengthening its soft power. Accordingly, Russia sought to project a favorable image of itself, especially after the imposition of Western sanctions that contributed to the creation of a negative and aggressive portrayal of Russia in Western media outlets (Ehrnrooth, 2018).

Russia understands that obtaining positive international media coverage is an essential condition for the success of public diplomacy campaigns (Majid, 2024). The more negative or unfavorable international media coverage is toward a particular country, the more difficult it becomes to establish credibility with target foreign audiences, a critical factor in enhancing soft power. In this context, Russia worked to strengthen its media relations with Africa by launching numerous training programs for African media professionals, with a particular focus on state-owned media institutions.

Despite the absence of the ideological elements that characterized earlier phases of Russia's "return" to Africa, Russia continues to exploit anti-Western narratives in order to win the hearts and minds of African publics and governments (Glassman & Glickman, 2011). In this context, Russian international media outlets such as RT and Sputnik, together with their social media platforms, constitute the principal instruments for disseminating Russia's public diplomacy message (Siegle, 2021). These media outlets portray Russia as a friendly power seeking to bring prosperity to Africa, while criticizing Western countries for perpetuating colonial patterns of behavior in their former colonies. The anti-Western discourse promoted by Russia across the continent has generated concern in France. Paris has expressed apprehension regarding the expansion of Kremlin-sponsored anti-Western propaganda in Africa, fearing that it could weaken France's historical ties with its former African colonies, such as Mali and the Central African Republic (Common Space, 2022).

Section Two: The Economic and Military Repercussions of the Ukrainian Crisis on the Growth of Russian Influence in Africa

Russian policy toward the Africa has undergone a notable transformation since 2014 (Alwan and Majeed, 2022), as a result of the interaction of several key factors that can be attributed to the effects of the Ukrainian crisis in that year. In the aftermath of the Western sanctions imposed on Russia after annexing the Crimean Peninsula and the subsequent escalation of tensions, Russia began to reassess its international strategies in an effort to strengthen its global position amid shifts in the international order.

The establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union and the commencement of Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015 also contributed to creating an environment that encouraged Russia to diversify its strategic partnerships beyond the traditional sphere of Western influence. Within this framework, Russia became increasingly interested in strengthening its presence in Africa, which represents a competitive arena involving former colonial powers and emerging states, including potential partners such as India, China, Brazil, Turkey, and Israel. These Russian initiatives were driven not only by the desire to break the economic isolation resulting from European and American sanctions, but also by the need to secure alternative financial and energy resources capable of enhancing Russia's ability to withstand external pressures. Accordingly, Russia revived its interest in Africa after a period of relative decline during the early 1990s through increasing investments at both the economic and military levels. This development reflects a strategy that takes into account the direct impact of the Ukrainian crisis in prompting Russia to strengthen its influence and expand its role across the African continent (Kalika, 2019).

First: The Economic Level

Russia has a long history of cooperation with the countries of Africa. This cooperation began during the era of the Soviet Union, a period characterized by Soviet support for the interests of colonized nations and their right to self-determination and the establishment of independent states. However, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these relations declined as Russia redirected its attention toward improving ties with Western powers, which caused nine embassies and four consulates to be closed and, consequently, to a reduction in the Russian presence on the continent (Захарова & Сокколова, 2021).

Russia's interest in Africa expanded significantly in 2000, when it introduced a new policy concept toward the continent that emphasized the importance of involving both state-owned and private companies in joint projects. Russia subsequently sought to bolster its trade and economic relations with African countries. Africa recorded sustained growth in its imports of non-oil goods from Russia, while African exports of these products to Russia also assumed particular importance. In addition, Russia exported fertilizers and military equipment to African states. Demand for Russian goods increased in countries such as Algeria, South Africa,

and Egypt. Russian exports to West Africa, particularly to Nigeria, reached US\$132 million in 2019 (же источник, 2021)

Africa's economic importance to Russia increased as a result of Western efforts to contain it (Mutlak & Lahmood, 2024). Russia has sought new markets and partners, while the relationship has also gained political significance because both sides advocate for and seek to promote a multipolar world order. Russia's political presence on the continent remains considerably stronger than its economic presence, and the geostrategic dimension of these relations continues to overshadow other aspects. This situation persists to the present day. Despite the economic progress Russia has achieved in recent years, its primary objective has been to establish a presence in strategically important locations overlooking key areas of Africa, including the southern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and major maritime chokepoints (Vuksanovic, 2022)

The summit convened by Russian President Vladimir Putin with African states contributed to doubling the volume of trade exchange with the countries of Africa, while also strengthening political and security relations. As a result, Russia emerged as an important political and security partner in Central Africa and West Africa, regions that had previously fallen largely within the sphere of influence of Western powers, particularly France. Numerous experts have affirmed that Russia has achieved notable progress in expanding its presence in Africa through a variety of means, including arms sales to several African countries and the provision of health assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic (Makambaeva, 2023).

Russia has also sought to strengthen its trade cooperation with African countries through the use of national currencies, the accumulation of foreign exchange reserves, and the development of regional and international financial centers. In addition, it has worked jointly to remove customs restrictions imposed on both sides gradually through multilateral agreements designed to provide the necessary legal frameworks to facilitate trade operations between Russia and Africa (Российский совет по международным делам, 2020). Russia believes that multilateral agreements can help overcome obstacles and challenges to improving trade exchange with African states. The mechanisms of lowering the tariff barriers are considered to be the institutions like the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (Маслова, 2019).

In 2019, for instance, the EEU signed an economic agreement with Egypt that included the progressive removal of customs tariffs and the ease of goods' transit between the two sides. This agreement represented an initial step toward strengthening trade cooperation with Africa, with the intention of expanding this approach to include countries in Southern Africa and West Africa (Высший Евразийский экономический совет, 2017).

Russia also sought to capitalize on the dissatisfaction of African states with the domination of Western powers over companies engaged in the extraction of natural resources, including oil and natural gas. Western countries imposed laws and strategies designed to serve their own interests by reducing their dependence on Russian energy, while at the same time adversely affecting the interests of local communities and African peoples. In response, Russia emphasized its capabilities and expertise in drafting legislation aimed at limiting the control of foreign companies over domestic markets, as well as in sharing experience with African governments to help protect their national sovereignty, develop local industries, and counter foreign domination. In addition, the BRICS has contributed in confronting the monopolistic control of African resources by Western corporations by supporting investment activities and promoting the establishment of a financial system and agreements that allow the use of national currencies. These measures are intended to reduce dependence on monopolistic foreign companies and strengthen African states' sovereignty over their natural resources (переговоров, and источник, 2009).

Accordingly, Russia sought, through the provision of assistance (Alwan & Manati, 2024), to strengthen its presence on the Africa while simultaneously limiting Western control over African resources, particularly in the energy sector. This objective became increasingly important as Western countries launched numerous investment projects in African energy resources to secure alternatives to Russian energy supplies. In order to impede these efforts, Russia initiated a range of investment projects in the energy sector. Approximately 20 Russian companies are engaged in the exploration of natural resources across Africa (Daniel & Shubin, 2018).

1- Gas:

Several Russian companies have concluded agreements related to the establishment of gas pipelines, including the following:

- The Russian company “Rosneft” signed an agreement with Egypt in 2017 worth \$1.1 billion in exchange for a 30% stake in an Egyptian natural gas field. The company “Rosgeologia” also concluded a number of agreements with Sudan to increase natural gas production in the Red Sea region in 2018. In addition, the same company signed an agreement with PetroSA in South Africa to explore oil and gas and enhance their production (РИА Новости, 2018). Furthermore, the South African ambassador to Russia announced at the end of 2022 that the state-owned company PetroSA was interested in cooperation with Gazprom (Лошкарева, 2024).

2- Petroleum:

Regarding the oil sector, several Russian companies are actively engaged in this field, including:

The Russian company “Lukoil” has obtained concessions in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Nigeria, Egypt, and the Gulf of Guinea. In February 2015, the company signed an agreement worth \$4 billion with the Uganda National Oil Company to establish an oil refinery (Bugayova & Regio, 2019).

Rosneft also signed an agreement in 2017 with heads of some Libyan state oil companies to restart the oil sector in Libya. It also signed an agreement with Mozambique in October 2018 to explore oil resources. The same company also signed a memorandum of understanding at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum in 2018 with the Nigerian company “Oranto Petroleum” to carry out exploration and development projects for around 21 oil and gas fields across Africa. This Russian company aimed to use the Nigerian company as an intermediary to develop oil projects in Senegal, Ghana, and South Sudan (Oil Review Africa, 2018). In 2019, the company “Zarubezhneft” signed an agreement with the governments of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for a joint oil extraction project (Besenyo, 2019). The company “Tatneft” also concluded a deal with Zimbabwe in 2020 to supply fuel in exchange for diamonds. In 2022, cooperation with Senegal was announced, including the development and supply of oil fields (Лошкарёва, источник, 2009).

3- Nuclear Energy:

The Russian Federal Agency for Atomic Energy, “Rosatom,” is considered the leading company in the nuclear energy sector in Africa, having implemented several nuclear projects in a number of African countries. It is worth noting the most important agreements concluded by the agency in Africa, which are presented in Table (1).

Table (1) shows the most important nuclear energy agreements carried out by the Russian agency in Africa after 2014.

Country	Year	Agreement
Egypt	2015	Construction of the El-Dabaa nuclear power plant at a cost of \$30 billion.
South Africa	2014 / 2015 / 2018	The two parties signed a strategic agreement in the field of developing the nuclear energy sector. Two agreements were signed that included training personnel in nuclear power plants. Additionally, the agency signed an agreement with the President of South Africa that included eight nuclear reactors in 2023 at a cost of \$50 billion. In the same context, the agency confirmed that the delivery of these reactors would establish the first nuclear power plant in Africa based on Russian technology.
Nigeria	2015	An agreement was reached to construct four nuclear power plants with Russian assistance, with a total value of \$80 billion. According to plans, the first plant was scheduled to begin energy production by 2025.

Algeria	2014–2018	Several joint agreements were signed between the two countries aimed at constructing a nuclear power plant.
Kenya	2016	The agency signed an agreement with Kenya during the Nuclear Energy Conference in Moscow.
Tanzania – Uganda	2016	The agency agreed with both countries to establish nuclear reactors for power generation.
Sudan	2018	The agency signed a roadmap agreement with Sudan for the construction of a nuclear power plant.
Ethiopia – Angola	2019	During the 2019 Sochi Summit, Rosatom signed an agreement with government representatives of both countries aimed at developing the peaceful use of nuclear energy in Ethiopia and Angola, including cooperation in building nuclear reactors for electricity generation.
Zimbabwe	2021	The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in nuclear energy, aimed at exploring the possibility of building a nuclear power plant in Zimbabwe using Russian technology. The agreement also includes cooperation in research and development, training, and capacity building in the nuclear field.

The table was made by the researcher depending on the following:

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In October 2022, Russia also signed an agreement with Uganda to establish a nuclear power plant. In the same month, Russia held the International Energy Week, during which Rosatom signed nuclear energy agreements with Burkina Faso and Mali, in addition to a strategic agreement between the Roscongress Foundation and the African Energy Chamber. In the field of conventional energy, agreements between Lukoil, Gazprom, and Rosneft were characterized as strategic deals based on trust, strengthened through energy cooperation during the Soviet era. (Анастасии et al., 2022)

4- Mining:

It is well known that Russia possesses vast mineral resources; however, it requires some raw materials like chromium, manganese, mercury, and titanium. Russia encounters depletion of reserves of other minerals such as copper, nickel, tin, zinc, and coltan. In this context, Africa represents an ideal source for obtaining these minerals due to its abundant reserves. Russia's interest has not been limited to importing these resources; it has also sought direct exploration opportunities through ownership of several mines on the continent, thereby enhancing its ability to compete with other major international powers.

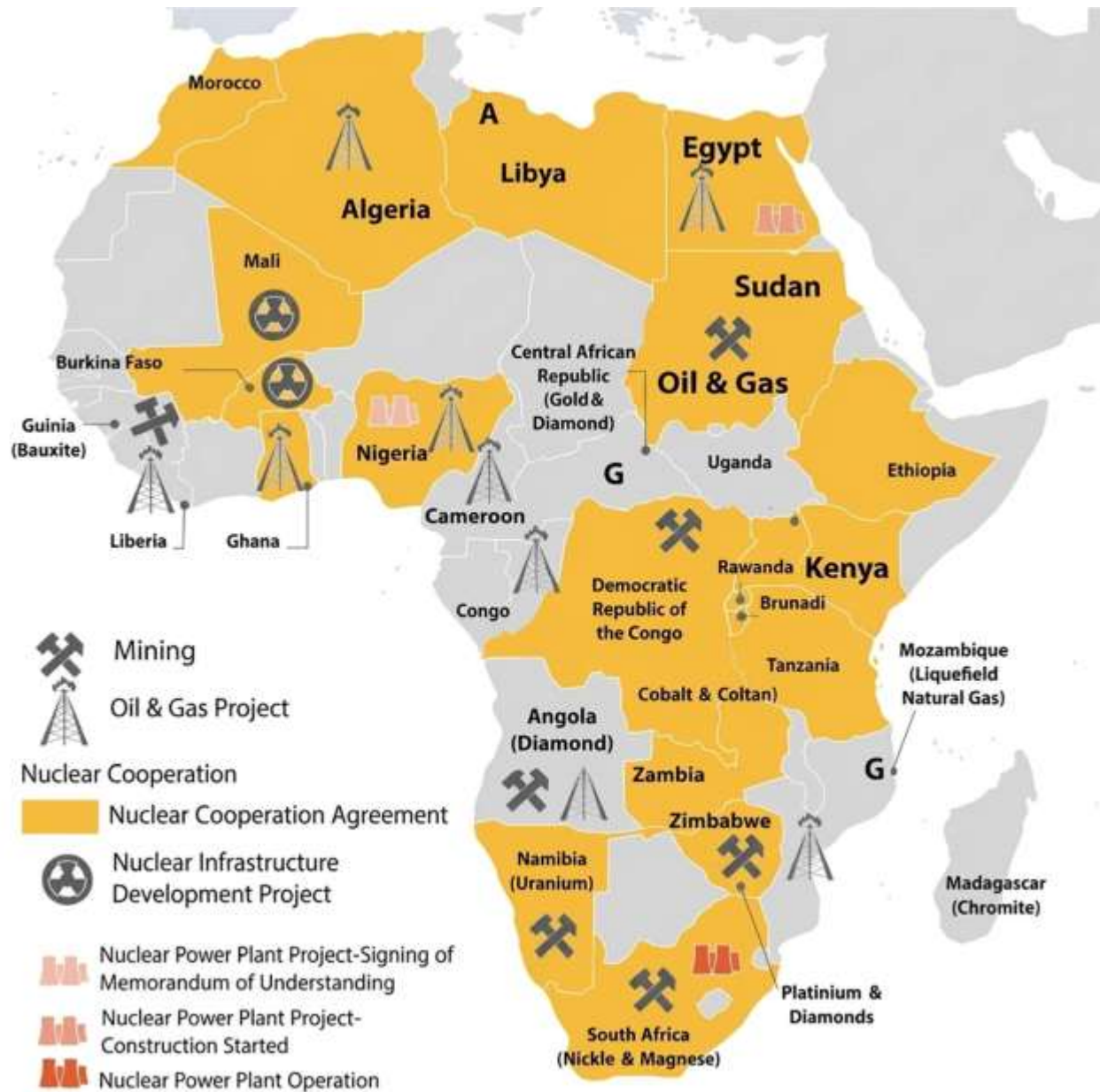
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Among the Russian companies working in the mining sector in Africa is “Severstal,” which is engaged in steel production and exploration, playing a role in supporting Moscow’s economic orientation. As shown in Table (2), as well as Map (1), Table (2) presents examples of Russian investments in natural resources in Africa.

Investment Company	Host Country	Industry	Investment Value (USD)
AlRusa	Angola – Namibia – Central African Republic	Diamond exploration – Hydropower plant	700–800 million
Evraz	South Africa	Vanadium exploration – Steel production	1.1 billion
Gazprom	Algeria – Nigeria – Namibia – Libya	Natural gas exploration – Pipeline construction	3.5–4 billion
Lukoil	Ghana – Côte d’Ivoire – Cameroon – Sierra Leone – Egypt – Nigeria	Oil production	2–2.5 billion
Norilsk Nickel	South Africa – Botswana	Gold – Nickel production	3–4 billion
Renova	South Africa – Gabon – Mozambique	Manganese – Uranium – Iron	1 billion
Rosneft	Mozambique – Zimbabwe – Malawi – Algeria	Pipeline construction – Oil exploration	0.7–1 billion
Rosatom	Egypt – Ghana – Nigeria – Tanzania – South Africa	Nuclear power plants – Uranium exploration	1.8 billion
Wuchan Chrome	South Africa – Zimbabwe	Platinum and chromium production	470 million
Rusal	Guinea – Namibia – South Africa – Nigeria	Bauxite exploration	2 billion
Severstal	Burkina Faso – Guinea – Gabon – Central African Republic – Liberia – South Africa	Steel production and iron ore	2.5 billion
Sintez	South Africa – Namibia – Angola	Natural gas – oil – diamond production	50 million

Source: The table was prepared by the researcher based on: Tamas Gerocs, “The Transformation of Africa–Russian Economic Relations in the Multipolar World-System,” *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 49, No. 160, 2019, p. 13.

Map (1) illustrates Russian–African cooperation in the fields of energy and mining.



Source: S&P Global, 27 July 2023; EIU, 2022; Rosatom (on Mali and Burkina Faso), 13 October 2023.

In the field of transport and infrastructure, Russia plays an active role through its participation in the construction and development of railway systems in several African countries. Among the most prominent initiatives is the agreement signed by Russia in 2018 to develop railways in Angola (Bugayova & Regio, 2019). The Russian government also signed a protocol of “intentions” with the Egypt aimed at modernizing Egypt’s railway infrastructure. This protocol was signed following the Russia–Africa Forum in Sochi in 2019. In addition, Russia held talks with Eritrea in 2018 to establish a maritime transport and logistics services hub on the Red Sea in Eritrea (Radio Free Europe, 2018).

Regarding trade with African countries, this exchange includes a wide range of goods such as chemicals, timber, petroleum products, as well as grains and fruits. The diversity of bilateral trade is observed, with a third of Russia’s imports from Africa being agricultural products like fruits, cocoa, coffee, potatoes and

more. Trade turnover in the Russia – Africa direction during 2020-2022 grew to be impressive and amounted to \$18 billion. This has been greatly aided by the Sochi Summit and the activities following it that have helped to develop economic cooperation. In this context, Russian President Vladimir Putin said during the plenary meeting of the Humanitarian Economic Forum 2023: “I am sure that we could all make considerable strides in the near future in terms of trade.” These ambitious economic measures would help Russia become a major force on the continent, which would contribute to the development of partnership relations and sustainable development (Гончарук, 2023).

Second: The Military Level

The sale of arms, and the training of personnel, is a basic feature of Russia's foreign policy and designed to support its involvement in Africa. Russia practices military-technical cooperation, training officers and providing military arms and equipment to various countries in Africa. This partnership underlines Russia's military and political alignment with these countries and adds to the Russian foreign policy goals on the continent, as well as being an important source of its economic income. African countries generally are more likely to buy their weaponry and military equipment from Russia because they have been reliable and cheaper than other suppliers.

1- Military Cooperation and Joint Exercises:

This represents an essential aspect of Russia's policy in Africa. The Russian government has signed numerous agreements for joint military cooperation with several African countries. The Russian Ministry of Defense also contributes to training a large number of African military personnel and provides them with training opportunities in Russia. These agreements include training African security forces in countries such as the Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania, Botswana, Burundi, Madagascar, and Egypt (Bugayova & Regio, 2019). The following are examples of Russian military cooperation agreements in Africa, as shown in Table (3).

Country	Year	Agreement
Zimbabwe	October 2015	Provision of weapons and cooperation in the production of military equipment
Cameroon	April 2015	Military and technical cooperation
Gambia	September 2016	Training of armed forces and delivery of shipments of military equipment
Rwanda	October 2016	Provision of weapons and other military equipment
Nigeria	August 2017	Cooperation in military training, peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and anti-piracy
Niger	August 2017	Meetings between military experts and cooperation in military education
Mozambique	January 2017	Shipments of military equipment
Zambia	April 2017	Provision of weapons and spare parts shipments
Eswatini (formerly Swaziland)	February 2017	Provision of weapons, military maintenance, and other military assistance
Chad	August 2017	Cooperation in counterterrorism and joint military exercises
Egypt	November 2017	Shipments of military equipment and weapons for counterterrorism operations
Egypt	December 2017	Agreement on the mutual use of airspace and airports
Central African Republic	August 2018	Military training

Burkina Faso	August 2018	Counterterrorism cooperation
Botswana	August 2018	Military training and peacekeeping
Burundi	August 2018	Counterterrorism cooperation and joint training of armed forces
Sierra Leone	August 2018	Provision of weapons and other military equipment, and technical support
Sudan	February 2018	Development of the Sudanese armed forces
Mali	June 2019	Military and security cooperation agreement
Mali	2021	Delivery of military equipment and training of Malian armed forces
Burkina Faso	September 2022	Military-technical cooperation and deployment of Russian military trainers

The table was made by the researcher depending on the following:

1-Jakob Hedenskog, Op. Cit, p 4.

2-Aza Boukris, Russian Military Offensive in Mali, Mondafrigue, 15 July 2019, At: <https://inosmi.ru/20190715/245462877.html>

3- Anna Ahronheim, Russia and Egypt Draft Agreement to Use each other's Air Bases, 30 November 2017, at: <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/russia-and-egypt-draft-agreement-to-use-each-others-air-bases-515671>

4- Алексей Мишель, Что известно об отношениях России и Республики Мали, Редакция сайта ТАСС, 23 Июнь 2025, Дата въезда 5 Октябрь 2025, Доступно на: <https://tass.ru/info/24326295>

4- Russia to Provide more military aid instructors to Burkina Faso, Alarabiya English, 5 June 2024, at: <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2024/06/05/russia-to-provide-more-military-aid-instructors-to-burkina-faso?utmcom>

2- Arms Trade: Russia is considered the world's second-largest arms exporter after the United States, with Russian weapon markets extending across various regions worldwide. According to statistics published by (SIPRI) for the period between 2013 and 2019, Russia constituted the largest supplier of arms to Africa, accounting for 39% of total arms exports to the region. Arms exports represent an important sector for Russian economic growth, particularly amid the Western sanctions imposed on Russia, in addition to the economic recession resulting from the global decline in oil prices. See Table (4).

Table (4) Examples of arms deals with some African countries (2013–2018)

Country	Year	Arms Deal
Angola	2013	Angola contracted to purchase Russian weapons worth \$1 billion
Angola	2017	Upgrade of 18 Su-30K fighter jets
Algeria	2014	Two submarines (Black-Hole class), 42 combat aircraft from Russian arms manufacturers
Algeria	2017	Four Iskander short-range missile systems; six Su-30MKA fighter jets; six Mi-28NE attack helicopters out of 42 helicopters requested in 2013; first batch of SA-T heavy tanks; Buk-M2E and TOS-1 missile systems
Namibia	2014	Rosoboronexport signed a contract with Namibia to supply Russian military products, including small arms for special units and anti-tank weapons
Egypt	2017	46 MiG-29M/M2 multirole fighter jets; 19 Ka-52 attack helicopters equipped with AT-16 and AT-9 anti-tank systems; S-300 missile systems
Egypt	2019	Russia signed a \$2 billion deal to sell more than twenty Su-35 Flanker-E fighter jets
Madagascar	2018	Russia and Madagascar signed a military agreement including the transfer of

		small arms to Madagascar
Uganda	2017	Rosoboronexport supplied Uganda with Sukhoi fighter aircraft worth \$744 million. In return, Uganda allowed Russian companies to enter its oil industry
Kenya	2017	One Mi-17 helicopter
Nigeria – Mali	2017	Two Mi-35 helicopters
Burkina Faso	2017	Two Mi-171 helicopters
Central African Republic	2018	Russia and the Central African Republic signed a military cooperation agreement for the transfer of light weapons, and Moscow sent 170 military trainers

The table was prepared by the researcher based on:

1. Keir Giles, *Russian Interest in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College, 2013, p. 23.
2. Arnaud Kalika, *Russia's Great Return to Africa?*, Russia.Nei.Visions, No.114, IFRI, Kremlin, 2019, p. 8.
3. *Rosoboronexport has Presented the First President of Namibia with a Ceremonial UAZ-3151 Vehicle*, Rostec, 2014, p. 23.
4. *Russia Secures \$2Bln Fighter Jet Contract with Egypt – Reports*, The Moscow Times, 18 March 2019, at: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/03/18/russia-secures-2bln-fighter-jet-contract-with-egypt-reports-a64842>
5. Janos Besenyo, Op. Cit., pp. 132–153.
6. Arnaud Kalika, Op. Cit., p. 8.
7. Imran Taha Abdulrahman Imran, "The Russian Role in Africa: Attraction and Presence (Case Studies of Central Africa and South Africa)," Arab Democratic Center for Strategic, Political and Economic Studies, Analyses, Berlin, 16 October 2024 (accessed 6 October 2025), available at: <https://democraticac.de/?p=100416>

Since 2020, Russia has begun to shift its focus toward West Africa, particularly the Sahel region, following the series of military coups that affected several countries in the area. Russia exploited this internal instability to strengthen its presence by increasing arms sales and providing military support to these states. Thus, Russia became one of the largest arms suppliers to several African countries in 2021. For example, Mali purchased Mi-8 helicopters, Alatorsl-39 aircraft, and a Russian Sukhoi Su-52 fighter jet (Karabektas, 2024).

The Director-General of Rosoboronexport, Alexander Mikheev, announced during the International Defense Exhibition "IDEX 2021" in Abu Dhabi that the company had concluded arms and military equipment export deals worth more than \$1.5 billion with several African countries in 2020 (RT Arabic, 2021).

The Wagner forces also played a major role in reshaping military relations between Russia and African states, with the aim of gaining influence and geopolitical leverage in Africa at the expense of Western presence. Despite repeated Russian denials regarding its knowledge of the group's operations or presence in various parts of Africa, Wagner forces provided political mediation and security protection for Russian prospectors to establish economic relations and conduct mineral exploration, relying on their strong political ties with host countries. These forces also helped to limit Western influence by swiftly filling in security voids, giving arms, training, and logistical assistance. Besides, they provided technical assistance, including geologists and attorneys, to assist in the extraction and sale of natural resources, such as gold (Pokalove, 2024). This is indicative of the multifaceted impact of Wagner troops on the continent in strengthening Russia's economic and military engagement.

Conclusion:

During the Ukrainian crisis the Russian presence in Africa has grown considerably and multifaceted. The expansion has occurred in several areas, such as arms sales, military training and securing stability and security in unstable countries. Russia's initiatives have also reached their completion of economic deals, including investment, trade and energy. These projects are part of the foundation of a new thrust that has a strong return component designed to re-establish this influence in Africa, which had been waning since the end

of the Cold War, in the face of an American challenge. This strategy relies on an integrated set of instruments of positioning and influence in the region. The study reached several conclusions, including:

- 1- Russia has no colonial history in Africa, which has provided it with an important opportunity to consolidate its influence on the continent and gain the trust of African leaders.
- 2- Despite the implications of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, Russia demonstrated to Western powers its ability to maintain its presence in Africa, notably through the Russia–Africa Summit.
- 3- The loss of credibility of Western powers in ensuring regional stability in African states has led African leaders to seek new partners.
- 4- The security dimension has constituted a core element of Russian foreign policy in strengthening its presence in African countries, through the conclusion of security agreements and the deployment of private security companies.

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