

Africa will play a crucial role in the rising new world

I prefer to die with my head unbowed, my faith unshakeable and with profound trust in the destiny of my country, rather than live under subjection and disregarding sacred principles. History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history that is taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or in the United Nations. But the history which will be taught in the countries freed from imperialism and its puppets.

Patrice Lumumba

In November 2024, I had the opportunity to participate in the first-ever ministerial conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum, held in Sochi following the Russia-Africa summit that had taken place in St. Petersburg a year earlier. The conference accelerated the development of reviving ties with the African continent and marked another significant milestone in Russia's foreign policy reorientation toward the Global South and East.

As a planner, I was particularly interested in gaining a comprehensive understanding of our African partners – their perspectives, concerns, anxieties, and aspirations. Upon returning home to Moscow, I implemented a long-standing idea: I put down on paper the impressions, thoughts, and ideas about Africa and its growing role in world affairs that had emerged from years of observations, travels and interactions, and from reading specialized literature.

This article is written with a specific purpose: to demonstrate that Africa possesses everything needed to become one of the strong centers of the emerging multipolar world and that Africans have already begun moving towards this goal. Let me state upfront that I do not claim to cover the topic exhaustively and have deliberately avoided delving into many historical, cultural, linguistic, and other aspects that fall within the expertise of regional specialists. The focus is on the evidence that illustrates the dynamics of Africa's emergence as a pole of influence, its characteristics, and its prospects.

My broader plan involves exploring all existing centers of globally significant political decision-making, as well as potential contenders for this role. However, the decision to begin with Africa was also driven by a purely symbolic motive: this continent is the 'cradle of humanity,' our shared ancestral homeland. Based on anthropological discoveries made in the Olduvai Gorge area (Tanzania, 1959) and near Lake Turkana (Kenya, 1972), scientists have hypothesized that modern humans, *Homo Sapiens*, most likely originated in the eastern part of Africa about 200,000 years ago.

Today's Africa is an extraordinarily complex civilizational entity. It includes both so-called 'Sub-Saharan Africa' and the Arab-Berber Maghreb, where the African world intersects with the Arab-Muslim world, with one civilization seemingly layered upon and transitioning into the other. It is a vast continent of many unique peoples, cultures, religious traditions, races, and diverse historical legacies.

However, an internal sense of shared destiny and belief in a common future, a drive for joint development, integration efforts in economics and politics, and an active search for African identity – these factors and more provide a foundation from which to view Africa as a cohesive geopolitical entity and an integral component of the multipolar system of the future.

The African pole – problems and prospects

In the declaration adopted following the second Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg, Africa is proclaimed as playing an *“increasing global role and influence as one of the key pillars of a multipolar world.”*

Indeed, Africa has all the prerequisites to transform into a sovereign center of power. With its inexhaustible demographic and natural resources, the continent has enviable geopolitical prospects if it seizes the opportunity for sovereign development. It is no coincidence that it is often referred to as the ‘continent of the future.’ With a population of 1.5 billion, Africa is on par with India and China, and its age structure gives it an advantage over these regions – half of Africa’s population is under 20 years old.

Experts estimate that by 2050, the continent’s population could reach 2.5 billion, meaning one in four people on Earth will be African.

Africa is a true treasure trove of natural wealth, containing 30% of the world’s mineral resources, including hydrocarbons, precious metals and stones, chromium, bauxite, cobalt, uranium, lithium, manganese, coal, and rare-earth elements. Spanning a total area of 30.37 million km² (roughly twice the size of Russia and with a much warmer climate), the continent boasts enough fertile soil to feed its entire population. Additionally, Africa’s geographic location provides direct access to global transport corridors, particularly oceanic routes.

Politically, Africa comprises 54 member states of the United Nations (UN), 27 members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), six members of OPEC, and five members of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF). Among BRICS countries, the continent is represented by South Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia, while South Africa, Egypt, and the African Union participate in the G20 on a permanent basis.

Africa is rapidly advancing in strengthening its institutional frameworks to align and implement the interests of its nations. This progress is rooted in the unique idea of Pan-Africanism, which draws upon the centuries-old history of African peoples and local traditionalism. It is undeniable that *“the revival of traditional values of African civilization is the key to Africa’s rise as a self-sufficient civilization.”*

The embodiment of Pan-African principles is the African Union (AU), which unites nations on a continent-wide platform and increasingly raises its voice in global politics on behalf of all its peoples. The 55-country group plays a particularly important role in strategic planning. At its 2015 summit in Addis Ababa, a programmatic document was adopted with the aim of transforming the

continent into a “*zone of power*” by 2063 – an initiative known as ‘Agenda 2063’. This comprehensive plan focuses on promoting industrialization and strengthening African unity. A strategic project to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) – the largest of its kind in the world – aims to significantly bolster integration processes, positioning Africa as a global-class actor in trade and politics.

A major step toward expanding the AU’s reach in advocating its priorities on the international stage was the union’s attainment of permanent membership status in the G20, alongside the European Union, achieved in late 2023 with the support of Russia and other participant countries.

The architecture of a multipolar world is being shaped by horizontal inter-polar formats and, in this context, the African Union and Africa as a collective of states are among the global leaders. In addition to the Russia-Africa summits, there are similar mechanisms such as Africa-China, Africa-USA, Africa-India, Africa-EU, Africa-Arab World, Africa-Latin America, and Africa-Turkey. The creation of an ‘Africa-ASEAN’ format appears to be the logical next step.

Africa’s integration into intercontinental processes is also facilitated through the participation of individual African states in organizations like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Organization of African, Caribbean, and Pacific States (OACPS), and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

For structuring the intra-African space, subregional intergovernmental organizations play a key role. These include the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) also hold significant potential. This dense network of political and economic ties within the African pole enhances its resilience.

According to informed Russian experts, African countries “*support each other on the global stage and adopt common positions on many current international issues.*” At the same time, Africa seeks to steer international discussions in a constructive direction, focusing on solving practical issues such as socio-economic development, combating poverty and injustice, eradicating modern practices of neocolonialism, ensuring security and conflict resolution, and improving resilience to epidemics.

Like the rest of the global majority, and perhaps even to a greater extent, Africans suffer from attempts to politicize international discussions and to subordinate mechanisms of international cooperation to the interests of former colonial powers.

Africans are dissatisfied that they are still being treated as mere extras in foreign-policy projects promoted under the banner of a ‘rules-based order’

These include attempts to lure African countries into ‘summits for democracy,’ held at the initiative of the US administration from 2021 to 2024, to pressure them into voting for anti-Russian resolutions at the UN and other venues,

and to secure at least the appearance of support for one-sided initiatives to resolve the Ukrainian crisis that fail to take Russia's interests into account.

African experts lament that the West is unwilling “*to recognize the right of the continent's countries to set their own agenda*” and that its policy toward opponents amounts to “*punishing them for having their own interests*”. We cannot but support those Africans who openly call on “*the EU and other U.S. allies not to impose their way of life and values on those who do not wish it.*” Nor can we disagree with the conclusion that, for some time now, the Ukrainian issue has overshadowed everything else for the West.

Africa's voice, amplified by a powerful innate potential, is growing ever louder on the world stage. We have no doubt that this beneficial process will continue to gain momentum in consolidating and bolstering the sovereignty of the African pole. Yet the Dark Continent cannot achieve a high level of economic self-sufficiency and, consequently, geopolitical stability without “*eliminating all the lingering effects of colonialism.*”

Africa in the fetters of neocolonialism

God deliver us from Europe, which cares about our freedom.

Bernard Dadié, poet (Côte d'Ivoire, translated from French)

Africa remains the continent most devastated by colonialism, having been ruthlessly exploited for centuries by European powers that drained its human and material resources. The wealth plundered from Africa served as rocket fuel for the accelerated development of European countries and the United States. In the 1950s, Liberian poet Bai T. Moore wrote, “*Civilization is in full swing – gold and diamonds are sent to Europe.*” These poignant words encapsulate the historical trauma inflicted on Africans by colonial metropolises.

African experts believe that the foundations of the continent's complex underdevelopment and the conflicts arising from territorial and ethno-religious divisions were largely laid by the predatory policies of colonizers.

Its historical chance to achieve independence and significance in global affairs came with the decolonization process of the 1950s and 1960s. The selfless struggle of several generations of Africans for freedom gave rise to a cohort of leaders whose names are etched in global history: Patrice Lumumba, Nelson Mandela, Jomo Kenyatta, António Agostinho Neto, Samora Machel, Amílcar Cabral, and many others. The year 1960 became known as the ‘Year of Africa’ as 16 of the 17 states admitted to the UN that year were African. These nations, having freed themselves from the military and political oppression of colonial powers (Belgium, Britain, Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal, and France), faced the arduous task of building newly acquired statehood.

However, the formal end of the colonial era did not bring true liberation from external dependence, particularly in the economic sphere. Despite being rich in resources, Africa, with its underdeveloped infrastructure and industries, continues to draw the attention of Western multinational corporations. Kenyan

writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o aptly noted that the West's struggle for Africa revolves around "*access to local resources.*"

To this day, Africa occupies a peripheral position in the international division of labor, essentially serving as a source of cheap raw materials and a market for high-value-added products. This discriminatory arrangement, enabling Western development at others' expense through unequal exchange, is highly advantageous to the West. To sustain and entrench this system, former colonial powers employ an extensive neo-colonial toolkit in Africa. This involves debt enslavement through the lending policies of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and other Western 'donors', external control over African governments, and exploitative schemes that channel virtually all profits back to Western jurisdictions. As African political analysts rightly point out, "*The West benefits from a system in which any so-called progress is driven primarily by multinational corporations and does not translate into development.*"

In the past, there were efforts to break this system and channel Africa's wealth toward the benefit of its people. Notable among these were Pan-African initiatives led by Muammar Gaddafi, the leader of the Libyan Jamahiriya, who was brutally killed with NATO's support. Gaddafi's vision was to harness Africa's potential for large-scale development projects. His plans were ambitious – ranging from establishing a common currency (the gold dinar) and building infrastructure to fostering a Pan-African identity.

It is no surprise that such a progressive vision for the future of the Dark Continent directly clashed with the narrow self-serving interests of the West and its neo-colonial practices of exploitation and domination.

To this day, financial aid to Africa from Bretton Woods institutions and individual Western countries is accompanied by humiliating conditions. African experts lament that, for example, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) predominantly promotes a political agenda rooted in neoliberal globalist ideology. The agency prioritizes activities in Africa such as promoting "*democracy, supporting civil society, and assisting in leadership elections.*" Similarly, the European Union's 'Global Gateway' initiative demands that Africans pledge allegiance to infamous Western values (including the primacy of LGBT rights, juvenile justice, racism, and Russophobia) and standards in exchange for assistance.

The scale of systematic exploitation of Africa by the West is exemplified by the situation in the global coffee market. The International Coffee Organization estimates its annual turnover at \$460 billion. Of this, Africa receives less than 10%. Germany alone earns more from coffee trade annually than all African countries combined. In food security, Western lobbyists have, since colonial times, pushed for the replacement of traditional African crops with wheat, which is poorly suited to the region's climate. As a result, many African nations have fallen into a man-made 'wheat trap', forced to import expensive wheat-based products from the EU.

In promoting so-called climate and environmental agendas in Africa, the West similarly pursues selfish commercial and political interests that contradict the

aspirations of African countries. As Russian President Vladimir Putin pointed out, African nations are *“offered modern tools and technologies, but they cannot afford them... and no one provides funding. Instead, they are forced to depend on Western technologies and loans. These loans come with horrific conditions and are impossible to repay. This is yet another tool of neo-colonialism.”*

The composition of the ‘Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment’, established for Africa in 2022, reveals the West’s view of who should control African resources: Australia, the UK, Germany, Canada, South Korea, the US, Sweden, Finland, France, Japan, and the European Union. Partnerships like these invariably deprive Africans of the opportunity to transform their resources into economic, technological, and political sovereignty.

The UN, aligned with Western agendas, exacerbates such policies. For instance, the ‘African’ section of the UN website prioritizes climate change over poverty, migration (40% of the global total, terrorism, piracy, conflicts, or drug and arms trafficking. Despite operating five peacekeeping missions in Africa, the UN, according to African political scientists, has demonstrated a chronic inability to improve security. UN agencies like the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UNHCR, and the UNDP focus on short-term coordination with biased Western NGOs. Moreover, Western donors politicize international development assistance.

The UN enables the West’s global cognitive warfare by legitimizing convenient concepts and narratives. For instance, the UNDP relies on the false premise of ‘violent extremism’, linking the spread of radical ideologies to human rights violations. Their recommendations effectively limit governments’ ability to combat extremist or terrorist threats that align with Western interests, ignoring real causes like destructive foreign intervention, state destabilization, and intercommunal tensions often provoked for the benefit of Western multinationals.

This reflects the broader political strategies of Western nations. The US strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa emphasizes promoting democracy, supporting civil society and activists, expanding LGBT rights, combating *“disinformation”* (read: censoring narratives unfavorable to the US or its allies), and facilitating a green transition. These revolutionary (in a negative sense) neoliberal agendas, designed to serve the interests of globalist multinational corporations, are starkly illustrated by their actions in Africa.

Young African experts rightly argue that *“escaping subjugation begins with decolonizing the mind.”* The West watches with concern as Africa moves toward geopolitical sovereignty. Some Western scholars reluctantly admit that *“African countries need to be understood and respected.”* Interestingly, the West has even called for rejecting the term ‘Global South’, alleging it to be a product of Russian propaganda. They worry that Russia *“leverages Africa’s frustration with inadequate representation in the global economy and governance.”* They also hold that *“the continent will not accept moralizing lectures.”*

A deep-rooted superiority complex hinders Western powers from treating countries in the South and East as equals. Consider that, as recently as 1958, live

individuals from Belgian Congo were displayed as exhibits in a pavilion during the Brussels World Fair. Human zoos operated across Euro-Atlantic countries – including Antwerp, London, New York, and Hamburg – well into the first half of the 20th century.

Time, however, runs its course. The main historical trend is that the era of Western dominance on the African continent has come to an end.

The disintegration of post-colonial zones of influence of former metropolises is underway. A striking example is the rapid decline of France's military-political control in francophone African countries. Africans are gradually shedding the burden of outdated and ineffective mechanisms of cooperation, including in the area of security, that are tied to the neo-colonial interests of the West. A recent example is the establishment of the Alliance and later the Confederation of Sahel States. Taking the resolution of long-standing problems into their own hands, leaders resisting external domination adhere to a principle articulated by African historians: *"Only formulas developed by Africans themselves, not imposed from outside, will work on the continent."*

The well-known principle of 'African problems require African solutions' is becoming a prototype in the era of regionalization of global politics. It serves as a model for addressing security issues in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, East Asia, and the Eurasian continent as a whole, emphasizing the responsibility of regional states for their own destinies.

Moreover, Africa's liberation aligns harmoniously with the broader international trend of strengthening multipolarity. Changes in the global balance of power have become irreversible. Experts on Africa emphasize that, under these new conditions, the continent must focus on developing its own institutions and deepening intra-African cooperation based on mutual benefit rather than dependency. These and other key themes were highlighted during meetings of the organizing committee for the Interparty Forum of Supporters Against Modern Neo-Colonial Practices, initiated in 2023 by Russia's political party, United Russia. The forum's founding session, held in February 2024, saw broad representation from African participants, resulting in the creation of the anti-colonial 'For the Freedom of Nations!' movement.

A significant political victory was the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution 'Eradication of Colonialism in All Its Forms and Manifestations' in December 2024. Drafted by member states of the Group of Friends in Defense of the UN Charter under Russia's leadership, the resolution was supported by an overwhelming majority of African countries. It aims to ensure full implementation of the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Additionally, it proposes designating December 14 as the International Day for the Eradication of Colonialism in All Its Forms and Manifestations, commemorating the date of the Declaration's adoption. This step, supported by Africans, suggests that the UN still has the potential to play a constructive role in uniting progressive forces in the fight against hegemonism and injustice.

The BRICS bloc, with South Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia currently representing Africa among its member states, is poised to play a key role in strengthening multipolarity. At the BRICS summit in Kazan in October 2024, additional African countries, including the Republic of Congo and Mauritania, participated in the ‘Plus/Outreach’ segment. Beyond the political significance of African participation in this multilateral organization, BRICS’ financial initiatives hold practical relevance for the continent. The New Development Bank and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement provide reliable, depoliticized tools that African nations can rely on to address issues of sovereign development.

African politicians and experts highly value the potential of BRICS, viewing it as a driver for building a new and fair international order, and a cornerstone of the emerging architecture of international relations that is replacing unipolar mechanisms. Russian political analysts share this view, emphasizing that the expansion of BRICS, including the addition of Egypt and Ethiopia, is “*a visible testament to the world’s movement toward multipolarity.*”

As Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov aptly noted, “*We are witnessing Africa’s second awakening, this time from neo-colonial oppression and practices that hinder its development.*” With the ongoing redistribution of economic and political power on a global scale and the creation of alternatives to Western financial, economic, political, and humanitarian platforms, Africans will gain even more opportunities to embark on the path of nationally oriented development. Russia stands ready to provide comprehensive support to its African friends on this journey.

Russia and Africa – time to gather stones

God grant us rain or Russians.

Somali Proverb

The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation notes that the country intends to support the African continent “*as a distinctive and influential center of world development.*” According to Vladimir Putin, cooperation with African states is one of the enduring priorities of Russia’s foreign policy. The declaration of the Russia-Africa summit highlights the historically established and time-tested friendly ties between the Russian Federation and African states, based on mutual respect, trust, and a tradition of cooperative struggle for the eradication of colonialism and the establishment of independence for African countries.

Russia and Africa share a common vision for the future. A joint statement issued following the 2024 Sochi Ministerial Conference emphasizes “*the responsibility of the Russian Federation and African states to promote the formation of a fair and stable world order based on the principles of sovereign equality of states, non-interference in their internal affairs, and respect for sovereignty.*”

Russia is invested in the internal consolidation of African civilization and its prosperity underpinned by sovereignty. Like our African friends, we reject modern

practices of neo-colonialism and condemn the policy of unilateral sanctions. We share a commitment to democratizing international relations and upholding the principle of the sovereign equality of states. Russia does not look down on Africans, respects their aspirations and interests, and is ready for an equal partnership without imposing ideologies, values, or development models. Each country's relationship with Russia is valued on its own merits. As Vladimir Putin has stated: *"In the history of our relations with the African continent, there has never been any shadow – never. We have never exploited African peoples, nor have we engaged in anything inhumane on the African continent. On the contrary, we have always supported Africa and Africans in their struggle for independence, sovereignty, and the creation of basic conditions for economic development."*

Africans gratefully remember the Soviet Union's contributions to decolonization, the development of their economies, as well as their statehood and defense capabilities. All the projects constructed with Soviet assistance became foundations for development and helped improve living standards. By the 1980s, the USSR had technical and economic cooperation agreements with 37 of the continent's 53 countries and had built 600 enterprises and other facilities. Soviet efforts included building schools, hospitals, farms, irrigation systems, and roads. African political scientists note that, unlike former colonial powers, Russia has historically aimed to address real problems without pursuing selfish interests.

No African state is unfriendly towards Russia. Not a single country on the continent has joined anti-Russian sanctions. Africa is among the leaders in refusing to support Western-initiated anti-Russian resolutions in the UN General Assembly.

In Russia, the states of Africa see an intellectual leader that can advance an agenda in international structures that aligns with the aspirations of Africans and the entire Global South.

Russia is also seen as a supporter of Africa's legitimate aspiration to expand its representation in intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). On this matter, Africans have a unified stance, articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration – positions that Russia respects.

Today marks the era of Russia's return to the African continent, a period of reviving lost connections and with each making up for missed opportunities. To understand the scope of the tasks ahead, it's worth looking at some numbers for comparison. In 1985, the USSR's trade turnover with African states amounted to \$5.9 billion and, by 1995, this had fallen to \$0.98 billion. Economic adviser positions were eliminated in most Russian embassies in African countries. Embassies in Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Liberia, Niger, São Tomé and Príncipe, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Equatorial Guinea were closed, as were consular offices in Oran (Algeria), Lobito (Angola), Port Said (Egypt), Benghazi (Libya), Toamasina (Madagascar), Beira (Mozambique), Ajaokuta (Nigeria), and Zanzibar (Tanzania).

Thousands of Soviet specialists who had successfully worked in Africa were forced to leave. This was all done under the slogan of *"economic feasibility"* for

Russia, which was supposedly “*feeding Africa out of ideological motives for years without receiving adequate practical returns.*” However, during the Soviet period, vast quantities of industrial products were exported to the continent, but this was not taken into account by the reformers of the early 1990s. As a result, Russia lost significant markets for high-value-added goods, sources of strategically important resources for modern economic sectors, and, of course, an irreplaceable network of human connections. Thankfully, this regrettable chapter in history has been closed and left behind.

The importance of Africa for modern Russian foreign policy is evident in the frequency of visits by Sergey Lavrov to the continent. In 2024, the minister visited Guinea, the Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, and Chad. In 2022–2023, Lavrov traveled to Egypt, the Republic of Congo, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Angola, Eritrea, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Sudan, Kenya, Burundi and Mozambique, while also making three visits to South Africa.

I had the opportunity to accompany the minister on these trips. Almost everywhere Sergey Lavrov was received, it was clear that the continent is waiting for us, that Russia is seen as a force advocating for truth, equality, and justice on the international stage, defending genuine sovereignty and statehood. Significantly, African experts draw a connection between Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine and the successes of African nations in their struggle for independence, noting that “*the course of Russia’s confrontation with the West influences the sentiments of nationally-oriented, sovereign forces in the region.*” This sentiment was often echoed by officials of African countries during the aforementioned visits.

Our country is capable of helping Africa address the strategic task of achieving sovereignty in key areas of life and to end all forms of neo-colonial dependence. Russia can assist Africa in advancing several levels upward in the international division of labor.

Russia is well-positioned to strengthen the statehood of African nations. We are promoting our role as a guarantor of comprehensive security for the continent’s states. The presence of Russian military instructors, training of armed forces and law enforcement personnel, supply and repair of military equipment, and support for legitimate governments in conflict situations have had a stabilizing effect and created conditions for development. Local analysts note that “*after the failure of France and UN peacekeeping forces in Africa, Russia has emerged as a reliable partner, accomplishing in a few months what international contingents failed to do for years.*”

Our country can contribute to the industrialization of the Dark Continent, including building small-capacity nuclear power plants, providing modular reactors, and constructing infrastructure and industrial facilities. Russia assists in ensuring food and energy security, improving healthcare, and strengthening the pan-African system for responding to epidemic threats. Africans remember Russia’s critical role in combating the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2015 and the timely delivery of Sputnik V vaccines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are vast prospects for cooperation in energy, geological exploration, mining, science and education, telecommunications, cybersecurity, and agriculture. Africans are also interested in working with Russia in advanced technologies, including peaceful space exploration, nuclear energy, and the deployment of advanced Russian information and communication technologies. Importantly, our cooperation is not conditional on political demands.

A fundamental step for the future is creating a payment infrastructure independent of the West. Given the West's influence over most universal international organizations, bilateral channels for assisting Africa are becoming increasingly significant. Direct, gratuitous assistance to needy countries on the continent through grain, fertilizer, and fuel deliveries is an essential aspect of Russian policy.

Maintaining the rhythm of structured political dialogue with Africa through bilateral summits every three years (the next scheduled for 2026) and annual ministerial conferences of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum (planned for 2025 in an African country) plays a critical coordinating role. There are also significant prospects for collaboration with regional organizations such as IGAD, SADC, COMESA, ECOWAS, the EAC, ECCAS, and others. The African Union's interest in linking the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with integration processes within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is promising. In the future, aligning AfCFTA with other integration entities could support Vladimir Putin's proposed initiative to create a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Russia is also reopening or establishing new embassies across the continent, including in Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Gambia, Liberia, the Union of the Comoros, and Togo. In 2024, new diplomatic missions began operating in Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea. Occasionally, individuals who built their careers in diplomacy during the "*embrace of the West*" in the 1990s and 2000s argue that "*few would want to work in Africa, given its harsher climate and limited medical facilities compared to Europe.*" While there is some truth to these observations, serving the motherland is primarily about fulfilling government objectives, with personal comfort being secondary. This view is shared by the leadership of Russia's foreign policy department and guides our approach in redirecting personnel to non-Western regions.

The development of interparliamentary relations also contributes to the Russian-African partnership. A notable example was the International Parliamentary Conference "*Russia-Africa in a Multipolar World*," held in Moscow in March 2023, which received positive feedback.

In the current environment, Russian businesses must adopt a more proactive stance, unlocking the inexhaustible opportunities available in Africa. The outdated notion that engaging with Africa is best done through Western intermediaries is rapidly fading. Russian entrepreneurs need to expand their knowledge base about African markets. Economic cooperation with Africa is no longer built on ideological doctrines, as in Soviet times, but on principles of complementarity and mutual benefit.

Raising awareness about Africa and its challenges is a task not limited to businesses. We must study the Dark Continent and the entire Global South through local and Russian sources, rather than relying solely on articles from The New York Times or on IMF reports. It is essential to revive the achievements of the Soviet school of regional studies, deepen engagement with the works of African authors, and shed the psychological complex of Western centrism—a tendency to view the global majority from a “*Western man’s*” perspective. Russia’s unique advantage lies in its school of African studies, where specialists proficient in African languages are trained. The Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) offers courses in Swahili, Afrikaans, and Amharic, while the Institute of Asian and African Countries (ISAA) adds Fulfulde. African languages are also taught at the Russian Peoples’ Friendship University (RUDN), the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH), St. Petersburg State University, and other universities across the country. However, during Soviet times, the range of languages taught was broader, and student enrollment was higher. There is room for growth in this area.

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Africa’s role in global politics is steadily growing. The development of a Pan-African identity is progressing slowly. However, the increasing self-awareness of African peoples and their determination to make up for what was lost during the colonial and post-colonial eras serve as a powerful driving force in establishing the continent as one of the poles in a multipolar world order. This prospect, as scholars of Africa rightly point out, has a direct impact on the fate of multipolarity.

In their struggle for justice and a “*place under the sun*,” Africans can fully rely on the support of their friendly partner, Russia.

Alexey Drobinin

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