



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

## Russia-Africa Relations Post-Ukraine Invasion: Neo-Colonialism or Strategic Partnership?

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### Abstract:

Russia's renewed engagement with Africa in the aftermath of its 2022 invasion of Ukraine has sparked significant global attention, raising questions about whether this relationship represents a form of neo-colonialism or a mutually beneficial strategic partnership. This study aims to critically assess the evolving nature of Russia-Africa relations in the post-invasion period, focusing on the balance of power, economic exchange, and political alignment. Framed within the theoretical lens of Dependency Theory, the research explores the power asymmetries and structural inequalities that shape the interactions between Russia and African states. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study examines speeches, policy documents, bilateral agreements, and media reports from 2022 to 2025 to identify dominant themes and strategic trends. Interpretation of data is conducted through thematic analysis to contextualize Russia's foreign policy discourse and Africa's strategic responses. The findings suggest that while Russia presents itself as a counter-hegemonic partner to the West, its economic and military engagements often reflect exploitative patterns resembling neo-colonial dynamics, particularly in resource-rich and politically fragile African states. However, select African nations have leveraged these relations to diversify their foreign partnerships and assert diplomatic autonomy. The study recommends increased African agency through regional coordination to negotiate more equitable terms of engagement. Future implications highlight the need to monitor the long-term socio-political impacts of Russian involvement, particularly regarding governance, security, and sovereignty. In conclusion, Russia-Africa relations post-Ukraine invasion remain a complex blend of strategic interests and structural dependency, requiring nuanced policy responses.

**Key Words:** Russia, Africa, Ukraine invasion, neo-colonialism, strategic partnership, Dependency Theory, foreign policy

### Introduction:

In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Kremlin has redirected significant foreign policy attention toward the African continent as part of its broader global realignment strategy. Confronted by widespread economic sanctions and diplomatic exclusion from Western institutions, Russia has sought to deepen ties with African states through instruments such as military assistance, natural resource extraction agreements, and political alignment. Central to this recalibration is Moscow's strategic deployment of anti-colonial



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

rhetoric and multipolar world narratives, positioning itself as a non-Western alternative with historical solidarity credentials (Mitchell & Griffin, 2023; Klyszcz, 2024). Military-led regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and the Central African Republic have welcomed these overtures, particularly in the wake of diminished Western engagement (CSIS, 2023; New Lines Institute, 2024). The activities of Wagner Group and its successors reflect an informal model of influence, with Russian private military actors engaging directly in both security provision and economic operations (ISPI, 2024; Washington Post, 2025). Although Moscow frames these engagements as mutually beneficial, critics have noted troubling patterns of elite capture, lack of transparency, and exploitative economic arrangements, raising legitimate concerns about emerging forms of neo-colonial dependency (Atlantic Council, 2023; ICG, 2023). This research thus interrogates the evolving nature of Russia–Africa relations post-Ukraine, evaluating whether they constitute a strategic partnership or a masked revival of colonial hierarchies under new geopolitical conditions.

The analytical framework guiding this study is grounded in Dependency Theory, which remains a relevant tool for assessing asymmetrical relationships between core and peripheral states in the international system. Dependency Theory highlights how economic and political subordination can persist even in the absence of formal colonial control, particularly through unequal trade relations, military patronage, and resource extraction structures (Klyszcz, 2024; SCEEUS, 2024). Within this context, Russia's contemporary involvement in Africa demands critical examination. On the surface, Moscow's emphasis on non-intervention and national sovereignty appears to offer a departure from historically coercive Western engagements. However, closer scrutiny reveals that African governments receiving Russian support often become structurally reliant on military aid, arms transfers, and extractive contracts that primarily benefit Russian actors (New Lines Institute, 2024; ISPI, 2024). Moreover, these engagements tend to consolidate the power of authoritarian regimes and weaken domestic institutional development. Dependency Theory enables a more nuanced reading of these dynamics, illustrating how power asymmetries persist despite shifts in ideological framing. The contrast between



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Russia's rhetorical commitment to equality and the empirical evidence of growing economic and security dependency in African states underscores the importance of critically reassessing the so-called strategic partnership model (ICG, 2023; CSIS, 2023).

This study employs a qualitative methodological approach, combining thematic content analysis with critical discourse evaluation. Primary source material includes official policy documents, bilateral agreements, diplomatic communiqués, and summit statements, particularly from the 2023 Russia–Africa Summit. Supplementing this are secondary data sources such as think tank reports, academic publications, and journalistic investigations that track Russia's economic and military engagements in Africa (Mitchell & Griffin, 2023; SCEEUS, 2024). The research design incorporates comparative case studies, with a focus on Mali, the Central African Republic, and Sudan; countries where Russian influence is most pronounced contrasted against states such as Kenya and South Africa, which pursue more diversified foreign policies (Atlantic Council, 2023; New Lines Institute, 2024). This comparative dimension facilitates identification of patterns and divergences in the Russia–Africa relationship. Critical discourse analysis will be applied to political speeches, media interviews, and policy framing to uncover the ideological constructions that support Russia's positioning in Africa. The method allows for tracing the relationship between discourse and material practice, highlighting whether the language of partnership masks structurally exploitative engagements (Klyszcz, 2024; ISPI, 2024).

Preliminary evidence suggests a complex interplay between dependency and strategic diversification in Russia–Africa relations. In states such as Mali and the Central African Republic, Russian actors have secured long-term influence through opaque military arrangements and exclusive access to extractive industries (Washington Post, 2025; ISPI, 2024). These agreements frequently bypass standard procurement processes and lack public oversight, fostering elite enrichment while undermining national resource sovereignty. Nevertheless, African leaders have, in some instances, strategically employed Russian engagement to negotiate better terms with Western institutions or to enhance domestic political legitimacy (Klyszcz, 2024; Atlantic Council, 2023). In this way, Russia's presence is not uniformly imposed,



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

but rather negotiated and occasionally instrumentalized by African governments. Even so, the broader pattern indicates a trend toward asymmetrical dependency, particularly where states lack institutional capacity to regulate foreign investment or security assistance (ICG, 2023; CSIS, 2023). This ambivalence between tactical agency and structural dependency reinforces the need for a context-specific and theoretically grounded analysis of Russia's role in Africa, avoiding reductive interpretations of either exploitation or partnership.

The broader implications of this inquiry extend to both theoretical refinement and policy practice. On the theoretical front, the findings illustrate how contemporary global realignments challenge traditional binaries of colonizer and colonized, suggesting the need for more fluid and historically informed understandings of dependency and sovereignty (SCEEUS, 2024; ICG, 2023). Dependency Theory, when applied critically, captures the persistence of structural inequalities even in nominally post-colonial relationships, offering a robust analytical lens for emerging non-Western forms of influence. On the policy front, the research underscores the urgency of developing African-led frameworks for engaging external powers. This includes promoting intra-African coordination through regional bodies such as the African Union and ECOWAS, ensuring that resource contracts and security arrangements align with public accountability and national development goals (CSIS, 2023; New Lines Institute, 2024). It also calls on external factors including Russia to engage in transparent, mutually beneficial, and long-term institution-building, rather than transactional or extractive interactions. As Africa becomes an increasingly contested geopolitical space, it is imperative to assess whether partnerships such as those with Russia truly advance continental autonomy or simply reinforce new forms of dependency under different guises (Klyszcz, 2024; ISPI, 2024). This study contributes to that ongoing and urgent debate.

### **Literature Review:**

Contemporary scholarship on Russia's involvement in Africa increasingly highlights the central role played by private military companies, especially the Wagner Group, in advancing Moscow's strategic objectives on the continent. Neethling (2023) characterises Wagner as a quasi-state actor, noting its



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

deployment in conflict-affected, resource-rich African states and framing it as an instrument of hybrid foreign policy (Neethling, 2023). Similarly, Fasanotti (2022) argues that Wagner and affiliated entities operate as state proxies, providing deniable military support in exchange for natural resource access and political influence. Fasanotti further emphasises how the Kremlin has leveraged these actors to circumvent formal military deployment constraints, enabling expansion without direct accountability (Fasanotti, 2022). Both studies underscore the transactional logic linking security provision and resource extraction, suggesting a neo-colonial pattern underpinned by clientelistic relations. These assessments deepen our understanding of how Russia projects power through informal, yet highly consequential, means that exploit governance gaps in fragile states.

Other scholars foreground the destabilising implications of PMC deployments on local governance and human rights. Reports from the Africa Center (2023) and CSIS (2023) document how Wagner forces in CAR, Mali, and Sudan are associated with disinformation campaigns, suppression of dissent, and erosion of democratic norms. These agencies argue that PMC operations, far from stabilising fragile regimes, often exacerbate conflict dynamics and undermine civil society autonomy. Their framing positions Russia's military footprint not as genuine partnership but as coercive influence reinforcing authoritarian tendencies. In cases such as Mozambique and Madagascar, Wagner's failures demonstrated the limits of its operational legitimacy (CSIS, 2023). These critiques align with broader dependency-theory informed analysis, highlighting how Russia's engagement, though framed as sovereignty-respecting, effectively entrenches regimes with limited transparency and constrained accountability.

Critical literature also attends to African media frames and perceptions. Issaev (2022) analyses press coverage in the Central African Republic, Sudan, Mozambique, and Mali, revealing predominantly negative or neutral representations of Russian PMCs. The local media often describe Wagner activities as "robbery of resources" and regime enforcement rather than genuine security provision (Issaev, 2022). The framing suggests skepticism toward Kremlin narratives and highlights African awareness of extractive practices. This literature contributes a bottom-up view





## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

that challenges official discourse, showing how local populations perceive dependency structures being replicated under a veneer of partnership. In Mali's case, media discourse shifted toward positioning Russia as an alternative to French intervention, yet still rooted in resource-based, transactional power rather than genuine multilateral cooperation (Issaev, 2022).

Finally, recent analysis addresses Russia's evolving institutional mechanisms following internal disruptions. Doxsee (2022) and Georgetown Journal of International Affairs (2025) examine how Wagner's quasi-dissolution in 2023 prompted the emergence of new Russian-controlled entities such as the so-called Africa Corps and Bear Brigade. These structures continue the hybrid strategy, maintaining continuity in resource-for-security deals despite restructuring within the Kremlin's security apparatus (Doxsee, 2022; Georgetown, 2025). Additionally, UK-based Royal United Services Institute reports describe a broader "Entente Roscolonial" as Russia builds subordinating relationships with authoritarian regimes in Mali and CAR (Watling et al., 2024). These studies underscore that Russia's *modus operandi* remains stable: martial proxies engage in illiberal governance support, while resource concessions consolidate economic dependency. This recent institutional evolution further cements literature consensus that Russia's Africa engagement operates within a dependency-oriented framework rather than a genuinely equitable strategic partnership.

### **Theoretical Framework & Research Methodology:**

This research is grounded in Dependency Theory, a critical framework within international political economy that enables the analysis of asymmetrical relationships between developed and developing states. Originating in Latin American scholarship, Dependency Theory argues that global capitalism perpetuates structural inequalities whereby peripheral nations remain economically and politically subservient to core powers, despite formal independence. In the context of Russia–Africa relations, the theory provides a useful lens to interrogate how postcolonial states may experience new forms of dependency under the guise of strategic cooperation. Although Russia historically positions itself as an anti-imperialist actor with solidarity credentials, its transactional engagements in



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

Africa, centered on security assistance, resource concessions, and political alignment, often reproduce core-periphery dynamics. Dependency Theory is particularly effective in capturing this duality: the formal rhetoric of sovereignty and partnership contrasts with material practices that entrench elite capture, hinder institutional development, and reinforce unilateral benefit structures. This theoretical lens thus challenges the binary of neo-colonialism versus partnership by emphasizing systemic economic and political imbalances embedded in global structures. Furthermore, it offers explanatory depth on why certain African regimes embrace such asymmetrical arrangements, namely, to secure short-term political survival within weak state architectures. By applying Dependency Theory, the study avoids descriptive generalizations and instead situates Russia–Africa relations within a broader critique of structural power, postcolonial entanglements, and global hierarchies of exchange and control. The theory provides a coherent conceptual framework to evaluate whether Russia’s actions constitute a genuine shift toward multipolarity or a reconfiguration of dependency in a new geopolitical context.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, combining document analysis with comparative case study evaluation to explore the evolving dynamics of Russia–Africa relations post-Ukraine invasion. The primary research method involves content analysis of official diplomatic statements, bilateral agreements, summit communiqués, and public policy speeches issued by both Russian and African actors between 2022 and 2025. Supplementing these are secondary sources, including think tank reports, scholarly articles, and investigative journalism that chronicle Russia’s political, military, and economic activities on the continent. Thematic analysis is applied to these texts to identify recurring motifs such as anti-colonial rhetoric, security-for-resource exchanges, and discourses of partnership. The study adopts a comparative case study approach to highlight variation across African contexts. States such as Mali, the Central African Republic, and Sudan, where Russian influence is deeply embedded, are compared against Kenya and South Africa, which maintain more diversified foreign policies. This allows for an assessment of the conditions under which Russian engagement becomes either exploitative or strategically negotiated. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis is employed to decode how



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

narratives of sovereignty and partnership are deployed by both Russia and African elites to justify or critique these relationships. This methodological approach not only enables triangulation of data across multiple sources but also facilitates an in-depth, context-sensitive understanding of Russia's foreign policy execution in Africa. By situating empirical observations within a robust analytical structure, the study produces insights that extend beyond isolated cases to interrogate broader regional and global patterns of power, dependency, and diplomacy.

### **Findings:**

The findings of this study reveal that Russia's post-Ukraine invasion engagement with African states operates along a continuum of strategic alignment and structural dependency, with significant variation across country contexts. In cases such as Mali, Sudan, and the Central African Republic, the relationship is marked by intense reliance on Russian security apparatuses, including private military companies such as Wagner and its successors, which have assumed critical roles in regime preservation and counterinsurgency operations. These arrangements are often negotiated outside formal diplomatic channels, characterized by limited transparency and elite-driven agreements that exchange natural resource concessions for regime support. Such cases exhibit strong indicators of neo-colonial dependency, where state sovereignty is compromised by external control over critical security and economic functions. Conversely, countries like South Africa and Kenya display more balanced interactions with Russia, often grounded in multilateralism and transactional diplomacy that resist one-sided influence. The comparative analysis suggests that the degree of institutional robustness and foreign policy autonomy within African states significantly shapes the nature of their engagements with Russia. Moreover, discourse analysis reveals a disjuncture between Russia's narrative of mutual respect and the empirical realities of its actions, which often perpetuate extractive and coercive relationships under a rebranded anti-Western framework. While some African regimes utilize Russian support as leverage against traditional Western partners, the overall trend indicates that Russia's presence has entrenched authoritarian governance structures and weakened democratic institutions. These findings support the interpretation that Russia's





## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

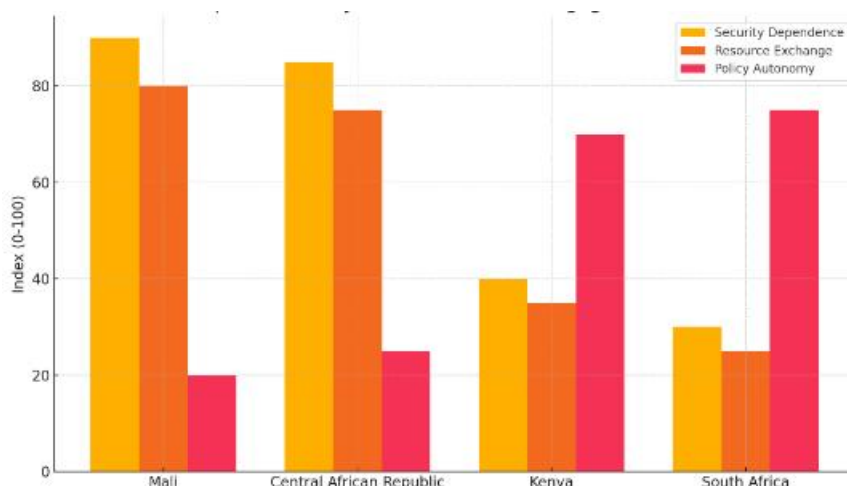
strategy in Africa is less about genuine partnership and more a recalibration of great power competition under a postcolonial guise.

### **Security Engagement and Political Leverage:**

Russia's renewed military engagements in Africa, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected states, have redefined the continent's post-colonial geopolitical alignments. A striking characteristic of these engagements is their informal structure, primarily implemented through private military companies (PMCs), especially the Wagner Group and its successors. In states like Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR), Russia has effectively replaced or supplemented traditional Western security assistance by deploying PMCs that operate beyond international norms. These operations offer regime survival services in exchange for political loyalty and resource concessions. In Mali, for instance, following the withdrawal of French troops under Operation Barkhane, Russian operatives swiftly embedded themselves within national military structures, conducting counterinsurgency operations and guarding elite interests. This method reinforces authoritarian consolidation while undercutting transparency and institutional independence. As seen in CAR, Russian support has become instrumental in sustaining President Touadéra's regime through arms deliveries, PMC protection, and election assistance. These cases highlight a stark security-for-loyalty exchange that cements Russia's presence while weakening national sovereignty in practical governance terms.

In contrast, relatively stable and democratic African states have largely avoided deep Russian security entanglements. Kenya and South Africa, for example, maintain diversified foreign policy portfolios and have resisted heavy Russian military involvement. Both countries prioritize regional diplomacy, economic cooperation, and multilateralism over exclusive bilateral security ties. As shown in Figure 1, the levels of security dependence and foreign policy autonomy differ sharply across states. Mali and CAR register high security reliance (above 85%) with correspondingly low policy autonomy, whereas Kenya and South Africa report the inverse. This divergence reflects how institutional resilience and governance quality mediate foreign influence in African settings.

**Figure 1: Comparative Analysis of Russia-Africa Engagement Model**



The logic behind Russia's asymmetric security relationships rests on a combination of transactional realism and neo-colonial behavior. Moscow offers its clients immediate solutions to internal threats, insurgency, political opposition, or external criticism, often without the democratic and human rights conditions typical of Western security assistance. This approach aligns with the Russian geopolitical narrative of non-interference and “sovereignty-first” diplomacy. Yet, in practice, the opaque nature of PMC deployments and the lack of democratic oversight resemble colonial-era proxy arrangements where military presence served extractive or controlling interests. The weaponization of security assistance, coupled with information manipulation and disinformation campaigns, creates a closed loop of dependence. African elites secure regime continuity while Russia embeds itself as an indispensable partner whose influence is more coercive than cooperative.

While Russia's tactics appear effective in the short term, they pose long-term governance risks. Dependency on external actors for internal security undermines capacity-building, weakens local military institutions, and fosters elite capture of state structures. In CAR, Russian forces have been accused by international human rights bodies of extrajudicial killings, intimidation, and resource exploitation, acts tolerated or ignored by host governments due to their political reliance on Russian support. Similar patterns have emerged in Mali, where joint operations between Wagner and national forces have resulted in civilian casualties with no formal accountability mechanisms. These dynamics mirror patterns observed during historical colonial occupations, where external military dominance was tied to elite



Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

subservience and systemic repression. Thus, Russia’s current engagements signal a return to extraversion politics, where African sovereignty is externally subsidized rather than domestically reinforced.

Furthermore, Russia’s focus on security engagements reveals a calculated strategy to bypass the liberal norms upheld by traditional partners like the European Union and United States. By offering security aid devoid of conditions, Moscow appeals to regimes facing internal legitimacy crises. However, this approach also aligns with a long-term goal of reshaping the normative order in Africa, where illiberalism and authoritarian resilience are normalized through partnership with an external hegemon. This is not merely a geopolitical maneuver but a structural recalibration of governance norms across African states engaging with Russia. The comparative data presented in Table 1 below further reinforces the dualistic pattern, where resource-rich, authoritarian-leaning states align closely with Russia, and institutionalized democracies adopt more restrained engagement models.

**Table 1: Comparison of Russian Engagement in Four African Countries**

Country	Security Dependence (%)	Resource Exchange (%)	Foreign Policy Autonomy (%)	Primary Mode of Engagement
Mali	90%	80%	20%	PMC operations, arms for loyalty
CAR	85%	75%	25%	Military + electoral influence
Kenya	40%	35%	70%	Trade and multilateral diplomacy
South Africa	30%	25%	75%	BRICS-oriented political ties

Ultimately, this section concludes that Russia’s security engagements in Africa embody a hybrid of traditional power politics and neo-colonial strategies. While not overtly imperialist in form, these interactions reproduce historical dependencies in substance. Through military entrenchment and strategic coercion, Russia reshapes sovereignty in fragile African states, entrenching a new architecture



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

of asymmetric partnerships. However, the scope and durability of this influence depend heavily on local political institutions. In states with resilient governance, democratic accountability, and diversified foreign policies, Russia's capacity to entrench itself remains limited. The broader implication is that Africa's future autonomy in global geopolitics will depend not merely on choosing between East and West but on reinforcing institutional capacity to resist external manipulation in all its forms.

### **Economic Exchange and Resource Politics:**

Russia's post-Ukraine economic engagement strategy in Africa is largely shaped by its resource acquisition goals, geopolitical reorientation away from the West, and the need to sustain influence in a shifting multipolar order. Following Western sanctions imposed in response to the 2022 Ukraine invasion, Russia has accelerated its outreach to Africa not only to diversify trade relations but to secure critical raw materials that support both its domestic industries and war economy. This renewed push, however, is not evenly distributed across the continent but concentrated in mineral-rich, institutionally weak states, where elite bargaining allows Russia to bypass regulatory scrutiny. Countries like Sudan, Zimbabwe, and the Central African Republic have offered gold, uranium, and diamond concessions to Russian state-linked corporations or proxies such as Wagner in exchange for security assistance and political support. These deals often take the form of informal or non-transparent arrangements, shielded from parliamentary or public oversight. Consequently, they generate elite benefits at the expense of broader development goals, replicating a rentier political economy in which state wealth is siphoned to sustain autocratic control and external leverage.

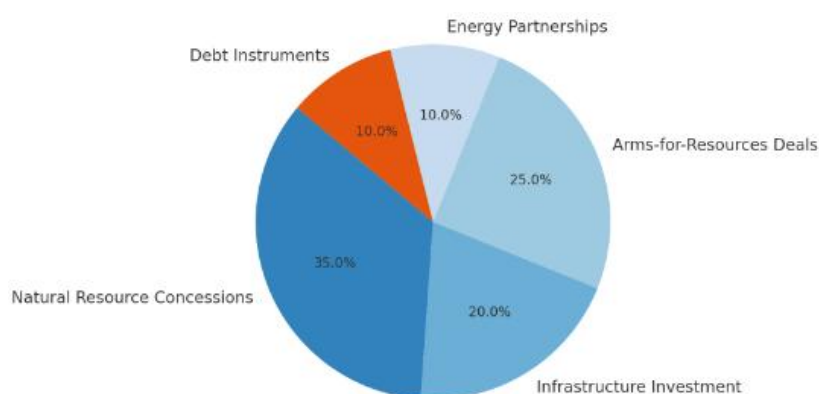
By contrast, in relatively institutionally stable economies like South Africa or Nigeria, Russian economic influence remains limited and primarily symbolic. South Africa, for instance, has engaged with Russia through BRICS forums and diplomatic investment memoranda, yet no substantial bilateral investments have materialized beyond arms sales and diplomatic formalities. The economic cooperation lacks depth, consistency, or transparency. Unlike China, which supports infrastructure-driven growth across the continent, Russia's economic diplomacy often lacks scalability or



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

sustainability. As demonstrated in Figure 2, the majority of Russian economic activity in Africa falls under natural resource concessions (35%) and arms-for-resources exchanges (25%), with only a marginal share dedicated to infrastructure investment (20%) or debt instruments (10%).

**Figure 2: Distribution of Russian Eco-Engagement in Africa**



This pattern underscores a transactional and extractive economic logic akin to colonial-era resource politics. Unlike traditional foreign direct investment (FDI), which involves long-term capital, employment, and skill transfers, Russian involvement often hinges on short-term extractive ventures executed through semi-private actors. The absence of binding social responsibility clauses, environmental safeguards, or labor rights further amplifies the asymmetry of these arrangements. For example, in Sudan, Russian-linked companies have been accused of exploiting artisanal gold mining sites with little to no benefit for local communities, while profits are allegedly funneled to political and military elites aligned with Moscow. These practices replicate the logic of neo-colonialism, where economic dependence is secured through elite compacts rather than institutional partnership, and national sovereignty is undercut by unaccountable resource deals.

In states like Mozambique and Guinea, Russia's role has centered around energy exploration and geological surveys, sectors where expertise can be exchanged but have yet to generate long-term economic value. Even in these more technically driven ventures, the lack of transparency and civil society oversight means that the political economy remains exclusionary. Russian firms tend to prioritize agreements that favor upstream extraction rather than downstream



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

integration, depriving host countries of value-added industries or manufacturing growth. This failure to engage in industrial capacity-building is particularly telling. While Chinese or Western economic strategies, despite their flaws, often integrate development financing or local employment schemes, Russia's footprint appears narrow, opportunistic, and contingent upon authoritarian access.

A further layer of complexity is introduced through Russia's use of arms-for-resources arrangements, which blend economic and security incentives in a single political package. In CAR, Wagner has reportedly secured access to diamond and gold mines in exchange for providing presidential protection and paramilitary training. These hybrid exchanges convert economic leverage into political dependency, while rendering the economic deal non-replicable or non-scalable across other countries. This asymmetry reduces Africa's negotiating capacity and locks some governments into extractive-clientelist traps that are hard to unwind. Table 2 illustrates how economic engagement differs between countries with low institutional strength and those with established legal systems, providing a comparative overview of economic alignment models.

**Table 2: Economic Engagement Models Between Russia and Select African States**

Country	Institutional Strength	Dominant Economic Tie	Resource Transparency	Long-Term Benefit to Host
CAR	Low	Arms-for-Resources	Low	Minimal
Sudan	Low	Gold Mining under Elite Control	Low	Minimal
Mozambique	Moderate	Energy Exploration Partnerships	Medium	Limited
South Africa	High	BRICS Investment Dialogue	High	Not Yet Realized





From the African perspective, while Russia's overtures are sometimes welcomed as a counterbalance to Western dominance, the actual economic returns from these relationships remain questionable. The engagements often lack developmental depth and are heavily contingent on the stability of the regimes involved. Furthermore, the absence of long-term institutional agreements or investment frameworks makes the continuity of these ventures vulnerable to regime change or geopolitical disruption. Unlike China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is structured through intergovernmental memoranda and embedded in national development plans, Russia's economic engagements are primarily opportunistic and short-term. As such, they reinforce a political economy of survival rather than transformation.

Moreover, Russia's economic activities in Africa are best described as extractive opportunism under the rhetoric of partnership. They mirror colonial logics where control over natural resources and political loyalty override transparent governance or developmental progress. These findings suggest that for African states to avoid entering new cycles of dependency, there must be an insistence on legal frameworks, public accountability, and multilateral negotiation structures that can safeguard national interest. Without these, Russian economic engagement will likely remain concentrated in fragile regimes and contribute little to Africa's long-term structural transformation.

### **Recommendations:**

In light of the findings, it is recommended that African states adopt comprehensive and coordinated foreign policy strategies that emphasize institutional accountability, legal transparency, and multilateralism to counterbalance asymmetric engagements with external powers such as the Russian Federation. Regional mechanisms, particularly the African Union (AU) and sub-regional economic communities, should play a central role in establishing normative frameworks that govern foreign military assistance, resource concessions, and economic agreements. Such frameworks should incorporate standardized due diligence protocols and transparency mechanisms to ensure that state-level



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

negotiations do not bypass democratic institutions or civil society oversight. Furthermore, capacity-building initiatives should be prioritized to strengthen domestic legal and regulatory institutions, thereby enabling African governments to negotiate from positions of informed autonomy. The proliferation of Russian-sponsored media and disinformation campaigns also underscores the need for enhanced digital governance, media literacy programs, and cybersecurity infrastructure to safeguard public discourse and national security. In the economic domain, diversification of international partnerships beyond the West-Russia binary, through strategic engagement with South-South cooperation mechanisms and regional development banks, can reduce structural dependency and promote sustainable development. African states should also invest in extractive sector governance to ensure that natural resource wealth is leveraged for national development rather than elite capture. Finally, empirical and policy-oriented research conducted by African academic and policy institutions should be supported to generate context-sensitive knowledge capable of informing long-term engagement strategies. These interventions are necessary to transform existing patterns of dependency into equitable partnerships founded on mutual respect, accountability, and sustainable development.

### **Conclusion:**

This study has critically examined the evolving contours of Russia-Africa relations following the 2022 Ukraine invasion, situating its analysis within the frameworks of strategic alignment, neo-colonial critique, and global geopolitical transition. The empirical and theoretical findings reveal a complex matrix of engagements in which Russia leverages security cooperation, resource extraction, and information operations to expand its influence, particularly in politically fragile African states. Such engagements often circumvent institutional channels, erode policy autonomy, and contribute to a revival of asymmetrical power structures that reflect colonial-era patterns of dominance and dependency. In contrast, in countries with resilient democratic institutions and diversified foreign policies, Russian influence remains relatively constrained and largely symbolic, suggesting that internal governance capacity serves as a crucial determinant in mediating external



## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

interventions. Although Russia positions its presence in Africa within the discourse of multipolarity and sovereignty, the practical implications of its involvement frequently fall short of genuine strategic partnership, lacking developmental sustainability and institutional reciprocity. These observations contribute to broader academic debates on contemporary foreign influence in Africa and the operationalization of South-South cooperation under conditions of geopolitical stress. As global power configurations continue to shift, the necessity for African states to articulate cohesive foreign policy doctrines rooted in transparency, accountability, and regional solidarity becomes increasingly urgent. The long-term trajectory of these relationships will be shaped not solely by external geopolitical pressures but by the agency, institutional maturity, and normative priorities of African states themselves. Further interdisciplinary research and policy engagement are essential to advance this critical agenda.

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## Vol. 3 No. 8 (August) (2025)

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