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China – Russia Bilateral Cooperation in Africa

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The report attempts to compare Russia and China's views on the current state of affairs in Africa and their prospects moving forward. Experts have tried to juxtapose the strategies pursued by the two countries and assess the opportunities for expanding Russia–China cooperation on the continent. The positions presented in this report reflect the different experiences of Russia and China in Africa, the unique features of their national political styles, and the asymmetry in the respective resource bases Moscow and Beijing and the set of tools they use in their foreign policies.

The views and opinions of authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of RIAC.

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Summary

Cooperation between Russian and Chinese think tanks working in the field of international relations plays an important role in the development of relations between Russia and China. The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) conducts long-term projects with Chinese research and analytical centers. The International Institute for Strategic Studies of Peking University (IISS) and RIAC has prepared a joint report on the strategic approaches of Russia and China in their relations with the countries of the African continent.

The RIAC staff and experts, researchers from the Institute of African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, experts and researchers from Peking University took part in the report. The report consists of three parts, each of which is a complete study, including an analysis of the experience, political positions and tools of the two countries that they use in their foreign policy. The first part of the report analyzes the medium-term prospects for Africa's development in the context of the global crisis in 2020 through the eyes of Russian and Chinese experts. The crisis of 2020 for Africa, as for most countries of the world, is associated with the coronavirus pandemic, accompanied by an economic downturn and a sharp drop in the prices of hydrocarbons as the main export item.

Russian researchers conclude that Russia's role in Africa in these circumstances will be limited and will be more visible in the field of security than in development. Chinese researchers note that before the Covid-19 pandemic, Africa's economy showed steady growth and a commitment to industrialization, and the process of transferring power in many countries was peaceful. These circumstances allow them to look at the prospects for the development of the continent in the future with a certain optimism.

The second part of the report is devoted to assessing the interests and goals of Russia and China in Africa. Chinese researchers have outlined four principles of China's interaction with Africa that, in their view, distinguish Sino-African relations from historical colonialism and modern Western approaches. China is ready to consider the possibility of multilateral cooperation in Africa to strengthen stability and development on the continent.

Russian researchers noted that despite the fact that 2019 was a turning point for Russian-African relations, Russia does not have a single strategy for cooperation with Africa. Nevertheless, the Final Declaration of the Russia-Africa Summit 2019 can be considered as a kind of reference point. Russia and Africa consistently advocate non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and defend the priority of national sovereignty. Russia seeks to strengthen political cooperation with African States in order to coordinate positions and develop approaches to the changes taking place in the international arena.

The third part of the report examines the prospects and opportunities for bilateral cooperation in Africa. Russia and China have common interests in Africa. Experts from both countries emphasize that the space for Russian-Chinese cooperation

on the continent is much wider than the space for their competition. The joint efforts of China and Russia to maintain peace and stability in Africa and to promote the development of the African economy meet the strategic interests of both countries.

The positions presented in this report reflect the different political experiences of Russia and China in Africa, and show the asymmetry of the two countries' resource bases. At the same time, the joint report shows that Russia and China hold close positions on fundamental issues of world politics. There are no irreconcilable differences between the two countries. Russia and China are not competing for influence in Africa, but, on the contrary, can complement each other's efforts.

Introduction

Interaction between Russian and Chinese analytical centres that specialize in international relations has increased significantly in recent years. Bilateral conferences, workshops and round tables are held on a regular basis; joint papers and collective monographs are prepared; and partner universities develop academic exchanges. Even the coronavirus pandemic failed to disrupt this collaboration fully, forcing it to move temporarily from the traditional face-to-face format into the virtual realm.

Most joint projects focus on bilateral relations and primarily involve Russian experts on China and Chinese experts on Russia. Their work is unquestionably important. However, Russia–China relations do not exist in a vacuum. The two countries live and develop in a very dense and highly dynamic international environment. Russia and China are directly affected by many events and developments both in their respective neighbouring regions and in remote Eurasian areas, and even on other continents.

These events and developments both open up new opportunities for Moscow and Beijing and create additional risks. Consequently, they need to be monitored on a daily basis and subjected to careful expert analysis. A comparison of Russian and Chinese views on today's global events is important both in theory and in practice. It creates additional opportunities to coordinate the foreign political initiatives of the two states and prevent possible misunderstandings. In some cases, such a comparison opens up new horizons for Russia-China cooperation. This is particularly important today, when influential international forces are doing whatever it takes to weaken the Russia-China strategic partnership, identity and exacerbate differences between Moscow and Beijing on certain issues, and, should such an opportunity present itself, position the two countries in opposition to each other. Naturally, such monitoring and analysis require that the expert community be expanded to involve experts on other countries, regions and continents. As a rule, these Russian and Chinese experts have never before worked together, but this is precisely what makes their dialogue and collaboration interesting and productive.

Africa appears to be one of the most promising areas for such an expanded dialogue. It is difficult to overestimate the role of the African continent in the current, and even more so in future global political and economic developments. There is every reason to believe that Africa is capable of proving to be either the core of the fundamental problems of the 21st century's global order, or an irreplaceable component of their resolution.

In the first scenario, we could reasonably draw a parallel between the Africa of the future and the Middle East of today. This parallel applies to the crisis that is unfolding with regard to state institutions and national identities in the Middle East, the paralysis of multilateral regional security mechanisms, the numerous conflicts between states, deep-running social inequality, and the rise of political

and religious radicalism. These negative features of the Middle East can easily spread to Africa in the near future. Since the African continent is far larger than the Middle East, the consequences of the impending continental destabilization for the international system would be more devastating than those of the current regional destabilization.

In the second scenario, the Africa of the future can be compared to East Asia today, that is, to the principal engine of the global economy. In a few decades, the centre of global economic activity may very well shift from the gradually ageing Asia to the still very young Africa, which will thus become a growth source for all other continents. This does not mean that all African problems will automatically be resolved – just as East Asian problems today are far from being completely resolved. Nevertheless, the “East Asian” model, unlike the “Middle Eastern” one, transforms Africa from a global political “liability” into an “asset,” from the object of various external actors’ plans into a crucial global political actor in its own right, and from a global-scale problem into a global-scale opportunity. It is in everybody’s interests to help Africa take the second path instead of the first.

The Russian International Affairs Council and the Institute of International and Strategic Studies at the School of International Studies of Peking University have attempted to compare Russia and China’s views on the current state of affairs in African and their prospects moving forward. They have also tried to juxtapose the strategies pursued by the two countries and assess the opportunities for expanding Russia-China cooperation on the continent. The positions presented in this report reflect the different experiences of Russia and China in Africa, the unique features of their national political styles, and the asymmetry in the respective resource bases Moscow and Beijing and the set of tools they use in their foreign policies. The attentive reader will also notice certain differences in the expert and analytical culture of the two countries.

Nevertheless, the joint report provides convincing evidence that Russia and China have taken close and even coinciding stances on the fundamental issues of global politics. There are no irreconcilable differences between the two countries. Moreover, they do not even have significant differences in their respective visions of the African continent, or in how they perceive the risks and opportunities involved in interacting with African partners. It would be no exaggeration to say that Russia and China do not compete for influence in Africa, but, on the contrary, they are capable of complementing each other.

Thus far, the report gives only a very general and condensed outline of cooperation opportunities. Preparing specific project proposals will require engaging new experts and holding additional joint targeted studies. Nevertheless, we believe that this report can be seen as a modest, yet important step forward in conceptualizing the prospects of the Russia-China strategic partnership in one of the world’s most dynamic, unpredictable and interesting regions.

Part I. Russian and Chinese Perspectives on Africa

Africa's Short- and Medium-Term Outlook: A View from Moscow

In 2020, humanity entered its deepest and most complex crisis since the start of the century. This crisis has many dimensions: epidemiological, economic, geopolitical, international and legal, to mention but a few. No one doubts it is a global crisis; essentially, global society is undergoing fundamental transformations at an accelerated pace. Yet, it is equally obvious that these transformations will have and already do have different consequences for different regions. As always happens at such turning points in history, we will see major global and regional adjustments in power balances between actors, new challenges and new opportunities for individual states, shifts in the customary sets of foreign power tools, etc. As for Africa, this crisis will certainly have many effects unique to that region.

The 2020 crisis has the following key dimensions for Africa: the coronavirus pandemic, the global economic recession and a sharp drop in prices for hydrocarbons and other raw materials that have traditionally been the principal export commodities for many African states. Exacerbation of conflicts in the Maghreb and Sahel are concomitant factors. The growing U.S.-China geopolitical and economic confrontation might give African countries some additional tactical opportunities, yet its consequences will generally be negative rather than positive, as they will transform African states from global political actors into potential objects of competition or even confrontation.

A preliminary analysis of the short- and medium-term consequences the systemic crisis will have for Africa invites several assumptions:

- Many African countries will emerge from the crisis with greater difficulties and at a slower rate than the world as a whole and the most successful regions (East Asia), although some African states certainly may constitute an exception by successfully overcoming the consequences of the crisis;
- The systemic crisis will exacerbate the multiple negative trends already present in Africa; it could prompt a host of new national and regional political, economic and social crises; many latent chronic problems that existed in Africa prior to 2020 might enter an acute stage;
- In the medium-term outlook, the West will gradually become less interested in Africa's development; most African states will find themselves partially or entirely excluded from the new system of economic and technological chains emerging in the post-crisis world;

- The West will largely perceive the African continent as a problem rather than an opportunity; the resources the West will be ready to provide for Africa as technological and humanitarian aid programmes, trade preferences, subsidized loans, etc. will shrink rather than increase;
- Current inter-country and civil armed conflicts in Africa will largely remain unresolved; they are likely to continue intermittently flaring up and subsiding;
- We cannot, however, entirely rule out the possibility of Africa achieving a powerful economic and social breakthrough, achieving major successes in transitioning to the new technological paradigm and social stability, and in modernizing state institutions; the likelihood of the optimistic scenario depends on a whole set of internal and external independent variables;
- Given an acceptable level of international stability, Africa's crucial objective for the post-crisis period will be to embark on sustainable socio-economic development; to achieve that, the continent will have to take long-term and painful measures for transitioning to the new technological paradigm;
- It is impossible to modernize African states successfully without reforming the international economic system and its constituent institutions; a new "Grand Bargain" between the global North and the global South is required, primarily serving Africa's interests;
- Russia's role in Africa's transformation will inevitably be limited but not necessarily marginal; in all likelihood, this role will be more visible in security than in development;
- In the more distant future, the strategic objective will lie in overcoming the civilizational gap between the global North and the global South; the necessary prerequisite for achieving this is for the international system to transition to a radically new and higher level of global governance.

Immediate Trends and Challenges

The Pandemic in Africa

The coronavirus pandemic came to Africa later than most other regions. It is not entirely clear why the coronavirus generally bypassed African states in March–April 2020. Some experts supposed the virus did not like high temperatures. Others believed it was a matter of most African states being less integrated into economic, humanitarian, tourist, educational and other chains that entail cross-border movement of large numbers of people. Still, others focused on the continent's unique demographic: Africa simply does not have a concentration of elderly people similar to other continents, while this group is most vulnerable to the coronavirus. Yet others looked for an explanation in the shortage or total lack of reliable tests in many African states. Then there were experts who looked for genetic reasons for African states' general resistance to the virus.

Yet, already in summer of 2020, it became clear that it was a matter of a lag and not of Africa's immunity. By early August, Africa had nearly a million cases,

with two states, South Africa and Egypt, accounting for over half the patients. It should be kept in mind, too, that, by mid-2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet peaked in most African states. From the point of view of the global epidemiological situation, major pandemic hot spots appearing in the North and South of Africa means that previous predictions of the epidemic's scale, duration and concomitant expenses will have to be revised. The proposed end of the global epidemiological crisis is being pushed back by at least a few months or even a year. The more unsynchronized the spread of the virus is between Africa and the rest of the world, the more Africa lags behind the world. As a result, Africa will experience larger disruption in economic, political, cultural, humanitarian ties between it and the rest of the world. The pandemic has put the already vulnerable continent into isolation.

Naturally, preventing the pandemic from spreading proves hardest in those places in Africa where the opportunities for providing prompt humanitarian aid are limited or even entirely absent; these are areas driven by civil and international conflicts, camps housing refugees and displaced persons, unrecognized states, etc. Fortunately, the most apocalyptic predictions of the pandemic spreading in these areas have failed to materialize thus far, but the threat still persists. Additionally, some experts believe that the practice (which has recently become widespread) of using foreign mercenaries in regional conflicts, including in Africa, could also be subjective to further spread of infection and subsequent humanitarian disasters in conflict areas. The coronavirus situation in Africa will become particularly serious if no decisive breakthrough is achieved in the next few months in creating, testing and manufacturing an effective anti-virus vaccine and if the pandemic becomes seasonal.

COVID-19 will have a negative effect on economic, social and political processes in African states. The pandemic could result in a surge in religious fundamentalism, political extremism and international terrorism. Combined with a sharp drop in economic activity, growing unemployment and an eroding social infrastructure, disappointment in the traditional political agenda and with the discrediting of state institutions, the pandemic will create virtually perfect conditions for terrorist recruitment. As the pandemic forces global community members to focus on their domestic problems, as the task of combating international terrorism temporarily loses its place in the national hierarchy of priorities for the principal global political actors, additional opportunities open up for terrorist groups.

Religious fundamentalism, in turn, is in itself capable of becoming a catalyst to the spread of the pandemic. For many fundamentalists, epidemics are the long-promised Armageddon, humanity's punishment for its sins; the salvation of the righteous and the death of sinners depend solely on God's will, and intervention here is not only futile, but also impermissible. Even if we are not talking direct opposition to modern medicine, mere disregard for medical prescriptions when celebrating religious rites could prove just as detrimental to controlling the pandemic.

The current crisis will put African states' very fragile political institutions to a very tough test, which may result in the long-term strengthening of authoritar-

ian trends in those states' development. Some such trends are already present in many states on the continent. Even though Ethiopia is relatively unaffected by the pandemic and the economic crisis, already in March 2020, it decided to postpone indefinitely the elections that had been scheduled for August. In April, Egypt used the spread of the coronavirus as the principal argument in favour of another extension of the state of emergency (although it has been in place in Egypt since April 2017).

On the other hand, the political leaders of some African states need particular support for their militaries while battling the coronavirus, since the army remains one of the most efficient state institutions. The military's enhanced position may turn out to be a long-term phenomenon unrestricted by the duration of the pandemic as such. Yet, the army's efficiency in both combating COVID-19 and in economic management under a structural crisis remains an open question.

The Global Economy's Structural Crisis

In the spring of 2020, the world entered another economic recession that most experts had been predicting for a long time but expected only in 2021 or even later. Some experts believed that the worst that could happen to the global economy would be a bit of a slump (from 3.5% in 2019 to 2.5–3%). Great hopes had been pinned on the U.S. and China reaching a trade agreement, which was expected to bolster investor optimism and advance stable economic growth throughout the year. They soon found out in March that the reality was far from their expectations.

Economic history shows that global recessions deliver particularly harsh blows to weak and fragile economies. Most African states have the greatest dependence on four external financing sources (1) foreign direct and portfolio investment, (2) wire transfers from labour migrants, (3) inbound tourism revenues; and (4) private, state and international donors' aid programmes. The crisis has hit all four sources hard. Unfortunately, there are not that many reasons now to hope that at least one of them will rebound fast.

Africa's financial markets were the quickest to respond to the new situation: already in March 2020, capital drain from African states totalled tens of billions of dollars, and capital flight from those markets continued; by the end of the year, the drop in private portfolio investment for some African states might reach 80%,¹ which will certainly pose real dangers to the stability of national financial systems. The drop in direct foreign investment is likely to be less sharp but it, too, could reach 35% by the end of the year.²

According to every indicator, these markets will not fully rebound in 2020 under any circumstances; most likely, the rebound will take several years. Given many uncertainty factors that always accompany a crisis, investors chiefly prioritize

¹ The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis on development finance // OECD, 24.06.2020.
URL: <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19-crisis-on-development-finance-9de00b3b/>

² Ibid.

investment stability and reliability over profitability. Snowballing financial problems in Africa appear particularly remarkable, especially since the global financial crisis was generally avoided, at least in the first half of 2020. The financial centre of today's world will continue to maintain its own relative stability through, among other things, increased volatility of the financial periphery. Therefore, what awaits Africa in the future is not only a slow rebound by its financial markets but also probable financial instability.

Both the coronavirus pandemic and the global recession have prompted Western countries to close their borders to, among other groups, labour migrants arriving from Africa, and it has certainly become a major problem. Economists predict a 20% global drop in wire transfers by migrants from developed to developing countries, which translates into losses of over USD 100 billion.³ A decrease in international migration flows from the South to the North will probably become a stable trend that will persist after the COVID-19 pandemic and the cyclical recession end. The pandemic objectively bolsters the standing of those forces in Europe and the U.S. that have traditionally advocated tightening migration legislation; migrants from any states are now seen as potential virus carriers. And since the Western economy is transitioning to the new technological paradigm, the need for additional workforce is inevitably falling, including those areas that traditionally employed labour force from African states. On the other hand, it is already clear that this year will prove disastrous for global tourism. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimates the drop in tourist flow at 20–30%, which corresponds to a drop of USD 300–450 billion⁴ in the revenues of the global economy's tourism sector. For several African states (Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt, Zimbabwe), foreign tourism remains one of their main revenue sources and their impending losses will measure in billions of dollars.

While the global agenda brings pandemic-related issues to the fore, traditional priorities of African states connected with yet unfulfilled socio-economic modernization tasks are inevitably forced into the background. It will be more difficult to keep international organizations, multilateral development institutions, national technological assistance agencies, and government and private charity foundations focused on these priorities. The total financial resources coming into Africa from the West in the near future is more likely to drop than to increase, while the «capital drain» from Africa to the West will grow.

Pre-empting such developments, already in mid-March 2020, the International Monetary Fund decided to defer USD 1 billion in payments to the 25 poorest, mostly African states. Major G20 creditors followed suit as they approved similar changes to the payment schedule of USD 20 billion for the world's 76 poorest states.⁵ The IMF's top management has ambitious plans to increase the Fund's

³ World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History // World Bank. 22.04.2020.
URL: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history>

⁴ International tourist arrivals could fall by 20-30% in 2020 // UNWTO. 26.03.2020.
URL: <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-arrivals-could-fall-in-2020>

⁵ The IMF's Response to COVID-19 // International Monetary Fund. 28.10.2020.
URL: <https://www.imf.org/en/About/FAQ/imf-response-to-covid-19#Q1>

capital significantly so that the IMF would have liquidity should the pandemic start spreading rapidly through African states. Although Europe supports these plans, they are unlikely to materialize because the U.S. disapproves of them. Washington believes that Africa does not need its debts written off, does not need to be pumped with money, but needs specific investment projects, especially since international organizations (including UNCTAD) estimate African states' presumed needs at trillions of dollars, not just billions. Should African states be unable to reach an agreement with their creditors, we could witness a chain reaction of national defaults with unpredictable consequences for the international financial system in general.

The current predictions concerning probable outcomes 2020 will bring to Africa demonstrate that even countries least affected by the coronavirus pandemic will experience a significant drop in their economic growth compared to 2019. Expectations for 2021 are being similarly adjusted and mostly downsized. We cannot rule out the possibility of some leading African economies failing to offset their 2020 losses fully in 2021, and a stable economic upswing will begin later than in other regions.

Falling Oil Prices

For a long time, exports of energy sources and other raw materials remained the only stable tie to the global economy for many African states. Consequently, falling demand and prices for those commodities inevitably put those countries' economies in very dire straits. Of course, the drop in the global demand for oil by nearly one third in the spring of 2020 cannot last long; the demand began to rebound already in the summer. Yet, global oil consumption stabilizing in 2020–2021 at, say, the level of 90% of its pre-crisis figures will entail very grave consequences for Africa's oil exporters (Nigeria, Angola, Libya, etc.). It is particularly true since those states, like other traditional oil exporters, will experience growing pressure from shale oil producers in the West, primarily from American companies that are, to some degree, supported by the American government.

In today's situation, «oil rents» are dropping more drastically than in similar situations in the past. This year already, this drop will result in significant budget deficits, which will require governments to take unprecedented measures to tighten financial discipline and cut existing social programmes radically. In turn, even limited abandonment of social paternalism and an increase in the population's tax burden could whip up protest sentiments and political opposition movements. This applies primarily to countries with large and rapidly growing populations (Nigeria, Angola, Algeria), where there is little room for social manoeuvre. Political stability in many hydrocarbon exporting countries is becoming more fragile than ever before since the beginning of the 21st century.

Falling "oil rents" will create additional difficulties in countering the coronavirus pandemic, while the pandemic increases the population's expectations of social support. Given the changing structure of the oil market, oil prices being temporarily adjusted to the average level of USD 40, 45 or even 50 per barrel cannot be seen as a long-term solution to the problem for most African producers, since

their market share will, in any case, be much smaller than in 2019, with all the attendant consequences for “oil rents” overall.

Falling oil and gas prices may, on the contrary, prove beneficial for those African states that import hydrocarbons. Even so, the flip side of falling import costs is an inevitable slowing-down in the development of alternative energy sources (renewable sources, nuclear energy), where Africa is significantly behind other continents as things stand. Even relatively rich African countries are now revising or delaying ambitious projects in these areas; national programmes for increasing energy efficiency are also being postponed.

In any case, large-scale development of alternative energy will require at least several years of sustained effort; major foreign financing and cutting-edge Western technologies will need to be attracted. Additionally, any energy diversification requires gradual abolition of state hydrocarbon subsidies for both businesses and individuals. “Denationalization” of the energy sector in many African countries will turn out to be not only painful but also politically risky, given the present recession. Most likely, the restructuring of the African energy sector will be pushed back at least a few years, while the “energy gap” between Africa and the developed world, instead of being closed, will gape even wider.

The West’s dependence on African energy sources and other raw materials might decrease, and this will undermine Africa’s bargaining position at many international venues, both economic and political. The West will be increasingly able to impose its own terms and its own rules of the game on energy and resource markets. Politically, it will give a boost to those who advocate «withdrawal» from the unstable regions of Africa and the Middle East. OPEC and similar alliances of raw material exporters will find themselves in very difficult situations, and some of them are very likely to be dissolved.

Should adaptation to the new situation on the energy market entail, among other things, accelerated construction of nuclear power plants in Africa, this could increase the risks of the global proliferation of nuclear weapons (especially since the international non-proliferation regime is likely to collapse). On the other hand, a long-term drop in demand for African oil might have a positive result, such as lesser incentives for foreign, primarily American, interference in the continent’s affairs, which will allow local actors to assume greater responsibility for their future.

It is certainly difficult at the moment to predict confidently the likely dynamic of global hydrocarbon prices even a few months ahead. It does, however, appear reasonable to conjecture that the energy market’s transformation into a consumer market will benefit the biggest oil and gas importers primarily: the countries of Europe and East Asia. For other consumers, the benefits will be smaller and they will play a less active part in pricing (with the exception of the U.S.). One might also conjecture that the current shifts in the global energy sector will change the regional and continental balances between developing states; in Africa, for instance, Ethiopia may become relatively stronger while Nigeria’s standing will weaken.

Medium-Term Challenges and Problems

Consequences of “Regionalisation”

A widespread opinion states that economic “regionalization” will be one of the long-term consequences of today’s crisis: partially closed integration alliances will emerge against the backdrop of eroding global institutions and of free trade principles still symbolized by the World Trade Organization. If this forecast proves correct, the majority of African states might find it unfeasible to form their own economic region. In this scenario of global economic development, North America (the U.S., Canada, Mexico), Europe (the European Union and affiliated economies of its small neighbouring states), and East Asia (unless, for geopolitical reasons, economic interdependence between China and its trade and economic partners, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, sharply decreases) will be able to act as “fully-fledged” regions.

Those groups of states that are more dependent on non-regional markets and investment sources (such as ASEAN in Southeast Asia or Mercosur in Latin America) will find it far more difficult to become “fully-fledged” regions.” Other regions of the global South, including Africa, are unlikely to be able to create “fully-fledged” regional economic cooperation systems so they will have to attempt to fit into the economic leaders’ groups on a priori unfavourable terms. This does not mean that the project of an African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is doomed to fail. However, AfCFTA’s transformation into a fully-fledged continent-sized integration union is hardly possible in the foreseeable future owing to the relatively low level of mutual trade and the inability to build fully-fledged manufacturing and technological chains. In most cases, “regionalization” will mean deterioration in international trade terms for those African states that do not have “safety” mechanisms, such as separate agreements with the principal parties to global trade.

The difficulty in forming “fully-fledged” economic regions is exacerbated by the world entering the digital economy age, which is radically changing the rules of the game on global markets. Automation and use of artificial intelligence in manufacturing will create difficult problems for all the world’s economies but, in Africa, the adaptation might turn out to be more protracted and painful than in other regions. The unemployment problem is already acute in African states and automation and the concomitant “return” of some manufacturing facilities to the West will certainly increase the scale of this problem and exacerbate polarization both between African states and within individual countries.

If the authorities prove unable to provide effective mechanisms ensuring social and professional mobility, large population groups will start turning into new fringe elements and paupers inclined toward political radicalism and various forms of protest activity; that, in turn, might prompt the authorities to tighten authoritarian governance mechanisms. Another emerging problem is young professionals embedded into remote international chains of manufacturing goods and services, who drop out of production cycles inside their own states. This is a sort of a “manufacturing emigration” without change of place of residence.

The inequality in access to higher education might also intensify in the post-crisis world and lead to other problems. On the one hand, a likely drop in student mobility will affect Africa's youth above all; most sources currently funding their education in the West will dry up and, additionally, they will face harsher immigration legislation in developed countries. On the other hand, budgetary problems in African states will result in balances in national higher education tipping in favour of private higher education institutions that offer relatively cheap but poor quality education. Graduates of elite universities offering high-quality education in demand for global markets will strive to find employment in the West, not in Africa. Consequently, the problem of staffing for the principal areas of socio-economic modernization will be intensifying.

It is hard to predict the consequences global economic regionalization will have for the environmental problems of the global South, but it appears almost inevitable that, once attempts to establish uniform global environmental standards and to comply with them have been abandoned, degradation of the natural environment in many African states will accelerate. Coupled with rapid population growth, this will result in a dramatic drop in the quality of life, which, in turn, will have significant social, economic and political consequences.

Global warming will apparently be the most significant factor, its inevitable consequences having been, until recently, virtually ignored by the leaders of most African states. The climate on the continent will be drier than today; water shortages will affect virtually all states. But even if climate change in African states results in greater precipitation or larger river resources, these states will not be able to use the additional water resources to increase the efficiency of their agriculture, since average annual temperatures will rise and water resources will become increasingly polluted.

Africa's relatively prosperous states will be able to stave off their water shortage by implementing expensive seawater conversion projects but, for poor states, this option does not appear feasible. Agricultural efficiency in many countries will fall, while Africa's dependence on food imports will increase. At present, Africa is forced to import USD 35 billion worth of food annually.⁶ These imports are expected to increase to USD 110 billion by 2025,⁷ while solvent demand will be dropping. Desertification moves things in the same direction and this process is likely to accelerate significantly. The principal social outcome of the environmental and resource crisis will be the acceleration of spontaneous urbanization, with large masses of former peasants, unable to maintain their traditional lifestyle, being forced to move into already overcrowded conurbations. Social tensions will mount accordingly.

In the more distant future, global climate changes will somehow affect all regions of the world, but different states will experience their consequences on different scales. Africa will inevitably find itself among those hardest hit: natural disasters,

⁶ COVID-19: A threat to food security in Africa // United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. 11.08.2020.
URL: <https://unctad.org/news/covid-19-threat-food-security-africa>

⁷ *Ibid.*

drought and abnormal temperatures will become more frequent; deserts will continue to grow; and the shortage of freshwater will get worse. Africa will be greatly affected by changes in the ocean level. African states will have to deal with growing shortages of natural resources, including food, with unstable prices for all these resources, and with a constant threat of new pandemics. It is of particular concern that Africa's environmental degradation will be combined with continued rapid population growth.

In the recent past, developed Western states allowed and even encouraged the transfer of «dirty» and energy-intensive production facilities to Africa, thereby improving their own environmental standards. In the post-crisis world, however, these states will, with increasing frequency, impose direct and indirect import taxes on products not manufactured in compliance with the domestic standards in the European Union or the U.S. So the West's increasing «environmental responsibility» will be conducive to Africa dropping out of the international division of labour. Not only Africa's industrial exports sector but also its tourism and agriculture, the backbone of many African economies, will be put at risk. At the same time, the destruction of natural ecosystems will accelerate and outstrip similar trends in most developed states.

A host of economic and social problems stemming from climate change will undermine political stability; the blame for the growing shortages of food, freshwater, and for natural disasters will be laid at the door of governments, stripping them of their legitimacy and provoking violence and coups, as well as international conflicts. Neither Africa nor the world in general has significant experience in preventing or settling conflicts stemming from environmental problems and climate change.

So, globalization continuing in the form of regionalization will not open up any new opportunities for Africa. On the contrary, this version of globalization hinders African economies in entering the global economy and strips them of many comparative advantages they had in the previous version of globalization. Regionalization will cause significant damage to the West as well, but the West is generally better prepared for regionalization than Africa.

Social Polarization and Instability

Africa has always had societies that were highly polarized socio-economically. A significant income gap between the poor and the rich has existed both within individual countries and between them. Traditionally, Africa has also had higher regional disproportions (between countries' capitals and peripheries, between urban and rural areas) than many other regions. There is every reason to believe that the current crisis will increase social polarization by accelerating the concentration of national wealth in the hands of small elite groups and by increasing the numbers of people below the poverty line.

The crisis will exacerbate the current gap between the elites and the majority of the population; social mobility opportunities and employment prospects will mostly remain very limited, primarily for Africa's youth and women, and in many

cases also for national and ethnic minorities. These developments will undermine social stability, particularly given the low quality of state governance, widespread corruption, and nepotism.

It cannot be ruled out that left-wing and other populist movements will be on the rise in Africa, demanding that resources be redistributed to favour the poorest population groups. It is, however, difficult to imagine Africa going through something like the Latin American “left-wing wave” of the start of the century or the “Arab Spring” of 2010–2011, since the opportunities for nationwide socio-political mobilization in most African states appear rather small today. It is more likely that central authorities will lose some of the *de facto* (not *de jure*) control of outlying regions, while charismatic local leaders will appear, staking claims to legitimacy and power on their territories.

Should the COVID-19 pandemic become seasonal and should anti-viral vaccines prove insufficiently effective, these trends could be accelerated by periodic COVID-19 outbreaks. Every prerequisite for new outbreaks of the pandemic is in place in African states. Most states have weak and vulnerable public healthcare systems. Rather, they suffer from shortages of accessible medications combined with overcrowded living conditions, particularly in spontaneously growing and poorly managed urban sprawls. It is not clear to what degree Africa can rely on international support in this area, given the crisis of the World Health Organization and the upcoming budget cuts therein following the U.S. withdrawal from the WHO.

Compared to the global North, a serious long-term problem for Africa is its extremely high share of shadow economy. Naturally, in some instances, the shadow sector makes it possible to survive in an acute crisis, yet the same shadow sector reduces the effectiveness of any social programmes and economic reforms. Additionally, the shadow economy serves as a breeding ground for organized crime, including cross-border crime; experts predict that the post-crisis world will experience an explosive growth of illegal drug trafficking.

Once the current systemic crisis ends, Africa’s economic and epidemiological situation will continue to be exacerbated by widespread corruption, ineffective state governance at all levels, and international sanctions imposed on some African states and territories remaining in place and possibly being tightened. Even having financial resources at the states’ disposal does not guarantee they will be used efficiently. For instance, the Libyan government in Tripoli has allocated USD 350 m to combat the pandemic, but due to years of civil war, Libya is so short of medical facilities that these funds are simply not enough. In many African states, societies have a low level of confidence in their state institutions, which hinders their population in complying with the states’ recommendations, thus helping spread the epidemic.

The increased number of so-called “failed states” will be one of the long-term consequences of the pandemic spreading in Africa and of the continent’s economic problems mounting. There are conflicts in Africa that have been going on for many years (Sudan, Somalia); the economic and social infrastructure has been partially or fully destroyed, and access to aid provided by international humani-

tarian organizations is also restricted. It is generally more difficult in Africa to combat the spread of new infectious diseases than it is in Europe or in East Asia. In turn, further dissolution of statehood in fragile states will escalate conflicts.

Some experts believe that the 2020 crisis should serve as a catalyst to long-overdue social transformations in African states intended to overcome inequality, fight corruption and the shadow economy, make state governance more effective and modernize the social infrastructure. The crisis could also stimulate decentralization of power, long-overdue administrative reforms and strengthening of local government. A faster change of generations in politics and in business elites in many African states accompanying the crisis could speed up these developments. However, given the acute shortage of financial resources and rapidly growing population, handling a comprehensive socio-economic transformation will be very difficult. The burden on the social infrastructure will increase owing to intensive and largely spontaneous urbanization. Conurbations populated by tens of millions of people will multiply in African states and the process will be boosted additionally by climate change and snowballing environmental problems that reduce the possibilities for keeping jobs in traditional agriculture.

Although breakneck urbanization could create new upward mobility opportunities and strengthen national identity, it could also produce the opposite results by entrenching existing social stratification and deepening unofficial social segregation. Even now, we see African elites and middle classes moving into closed urban settlements while former peasants and refugees spontaneously form bidonvilles on the outskirts of metropolises without access to urban utilities and services and even without the legal status of urban residents. It is not entirely clear whether careful urban planning is able to stop, let alone reverse, these negative trends.

Social tensions between privileged capital cities and other urban centres are very likely to intensify as the latter are funded residually so demand that resources be redistributed in their favour. In conflict and post-conflict situations, urban development can become an additional source of tension. Finally, the current political instability in a particular country could hamper the development of urban autonomy and block the decentralization needed for efficient urban governance.

In general, it seems correct to state that African countries face increased risks stemming from social polarization and attendant political tensions. At the same time, national social revolutions comparable to the revolutions in Europe and Asia in the 19th–20th centuries appear unlikely. Political radicalism will be related rather to group identities than to socially determined (class) interests. It will be a major obstacle to achieving any sort of a post-crisis “social contract”: a compromise over interests is always easier to achieve than a compromise over identity.

Threats of Political Radicalism

Historical experience shows that, when societies face a major crisis (wars, terror attacks, natural disasters, epidemics), as a rule, they tend to unite around national leaders, temporarily pushing their current political, economic, ideological and other differences into the background. The outbreak of the systemic crisis

in 2020 promoted socio-political unification not only in Europe and East Asia, but also in Africa. Street protests fell in many countries, national leaders' ratings went up, and even the opposition called for a «coronavirus truce.»

The same historical experience, however, demonstrates that such unification may be short-lived, especially if a country's leadership does not achieve any successes in combating the crisis that would be demonstrable and significant for the principal social groups. This is particularly typical for poor states whose populations do not have large savings to sustain them for any significant length of time in a difficult economic situation. A short surge in national unity sentiments is followed by disappointment and annoyance caused by betrayed expectations people had pinned on their national leadership. Current high ratings of national leaders should not mislead anyone: many Middle Eastern autocrats had similarly high ratings virtually on the eve of the “Arab Spring.”

If already weak state institutions weaken further in the fragile African states and if their state identity undergoes concomitant erosion, we may predict a revival of tribalism and other forms of group identity, including religious, ethnic, regional, tribal and even age-based and gender identities. This trend will further weaken state institutions and official legal mechanisms for incorporating group interests into nationwide political processes; thus, a negative causal vicious circle will emerge. A crisis of statehood that had brewed long before 2020 will not necessarily take the form of classical separatism. However, a challenge to a group identity could, in many respects, prove far more dangerous since it defies being fixed clearly and, given a deteriorating economic situation and growing social polarization, it is an even greater challenge to find effective countermeasures.

The archaic authoritarian regimes, hybrid regimes and immature democracies typical of most African states appear unlikely to find adequate responses to this challenge at all quickly. Most still view diversity not as a source of power but on the contrary, as a source of weakness. Consequently, they are likely to respond to rising group identities by stepping up covert or overt discrimination against and segregation of minorities, suppressing dissent, forcibly imposing “nationwide” identities, etc.

Such a course of action may, among other things, boost the appeal of radical religious movements. The role of the religious factor in Africa can vary widely and will largely depend on whether a particular African country makes well thought-through and rational decisions. One might suppose that further religious fragmentation, centrifugal trends in religious life, and the diminishing influence official religious hierarchies have on individual religious choices will form a general long-term trend. However, the advance of religious pluralism will not necessarily entail harmonization of inter-denominational relations. Given a negative juncture of events, it could bring about new fragmentation or even polarization, driving a wedge between supporters of secularization, on the one hand, and staunch believers, on the other. A new schism could get out of hand and defy both state authorities and local community leaders.

Desiring to bolster a single national identity, authorities may revert to the traditional secular authoritarianism and sacrifice human and minority rights to that desire. In the absence of powerful state institutions and experience in achieving compromises, pluralism might provoke the authorities to attempt to restore national unity "at any cost," which will entail local religious and ethnic purges and discrimination against religious minorities.

The pandemic and economic difficulties are already being actively used by radical, extremist and even terrorist groups to bolster their legitimacy against the backdrop of inaction or insufficient effectiveness on the part of the official authorities. When the authorities are incapable of providing the population with even basic social services, non-governmental bodies, including organized crime, take the place of the state. For instance, North Africa is developing a routine practice of local drug dealers or "overseers" of illegal migration flows simultaneously supporting local communities, offering "unofficial" employment, etc.

While the likelihood of nationwide social revolutions appears low, that of a sharp spike in the political activities of various groups, including radical ones, maybe deemed high. It is also likely that radical cross-border political movements of all kinds will step up their activities, which also casts doubt on the applicability of the «Westphalian» principles to large regions of the African continent. Accordingly, the question arises whether the trend toward the strengthening of nation-states in the post-crisis world is, indeed, universal.

The Advance of Authoritarianism

As noted before, many of Africa's problems stem from the institutional weakness of its states, some of which are already de facto "failed" states. Nonetheless, the states of post-crisis Africa will undoubtedly still stake their claims to being the principal political, social and economic actors and will position themselves as the main or even sole guarantors of national elites' survival. Even if a state is not strong in combating the coronavirus pandemic and minimizing the consequences of the economic crisis, this state will still attempt to appear strong in its ability to control the nation's political and economic space. This applies both to individual elements of the state apparatus (officials, the military, police, security forces, the state sector) and to the forms of the state control system (client relations, imitating democratic procedures and institutions, "top-down governance," "economic micromanagement," etc.).

Turning to authoritarianism as the only reliable instrument for preserving statehood is one likely response to the threats of political radicalism and strengthening of group identities in Africa. This trend will obtain not only in those states that have an entrenched authoritarian rule tradition but also in ones that currently have democratic regimes. The temptation to resort to authoritarian governance will grow stronger as unresolved problems in socio-economic and political modernization mount, including the above-mentioned economic and social polarization, unemployment and low effectiveness of state institutions.

For most of Africa's authoritarian and hybrid regimes, consistent and stable

democratization of their political life appears unlikely in the short- and medium-term not only because their political repressions are effective but also because opposition movements are fragmented, while many of their programmes are incompatible. The unfortunate experience of the “Arab Spring” of a decade ago seems relevant to Africa as well. Additionally, we might suppose that, in the next few years, Africa will experience a qualitative breakthrough in socio-political manipulation technologies, including more active use of modern information and communication technologies.

Account should be taken of African elites becoming increasingly disappointed with Western liberal democracy models since the West has been incapable of demonstrating a successful model for combating the pandemic. Disappointment in liberal development models will feed off the growing and inevitable anti-Western sentiments while the leading Western states increasingly concentrate on their domestic problems and curb their participation in resolving Africa’s diverse issues. Additionally, in the post-crisis world, the U.S. and the states of the European Union, being aware of their limited capacities and facing many domestic challenges to political liberalism, are most likely no longer to attempt to implement their once-fashionable strategy of “exporting democracy”.

The rapid spread of information and communication technologies in Africa creates additional opportunities for social and political mobilization of pro-opposition population groups. In those cases when authoritarian regimes fail to take control of the Internet, there emerge the prerequisites for rapid development of a «virtual civil society» with participation by those groups that are traditionally least active (women, the unemployed, ethnic and religious minorities). The activities of these groups could be an important factor accelerating the social and political transformation of African states. History shows that extensive use of information and communication technologies for political purposes creates both new opportunities and new risks.

If those who support preserving the political status quo somehow succeed in dealing with mass protest movements, many conflicts within ruling elites (between the military and the technocrats, between nationalists and compradors, between religious and secular leaders, and between other groups opposed to one another) will apparently be the principal source of instability in African states. In many of those states, political transit problems remain unresolved, which creates the prerequisites for all kinds of palace coups, military putsches, plots, etc.

Chronic political instability will progressively reduce the effectiveness of state governance, breed corruption, feed radical opposition and hinder socio-economic modernization. Authoritarian regimes cruelly suppressing their own citizens could result in the current leaders losing their legitimacy; it could also provoke new schisms within the ruling elites and stimulate centrifugal political trends. In addition to losing their legitimacy within their own states, tough authoritarian leaders will lose their legitimacy in the eyes of the West, which will result in technical and financial aid programmes being curtailed and in all kinds of sanction being imposed.

Many African states might find themselves trapped by the population's growing expectations and the authorities' declining opportunities to meet those expectations. The population expects the paternalist social contract to remain in place and new social mobility opportunities to appear while, in practice, they receive tightened state control. This contradiction immediately widens the gap between the ruling elites and societies, with all the attendant negative consequences for socio-political stability. Attempts to bolster states in order to accelerate authoritarian socio-economic modernization could also translate into tougher repressions, especially when a state is forced to make unpopular decisions and burden its population with additional modernization costs.

Repressive states will exchange their experiences and improve their techniques for suppressing the opposition; however, autocrats appear unlikely to form stable alliances and unions. Regionally, strong authoritarian states will take tough steps to protect their sovereignty, structuring the relations with their neighbours as a "zero-sum" game and attempting to benefit from differences between great powers. This approach makes creating any sort of regional or continental collective security systems in Africa highly unlikely.

The Risks of Regional Conflicts Intensifying

Regionally, the first consequence of the coronavirus pandemic was the adjustment of regional balances and emergence of additional opportunities for some actors and of additional difficulties for others. Africa's two obvious claimants to continental leadership, South Africa and Egypt, have been particularly affected by the pandemic, which limits their opportunities in relation to other African states.

The global pandemic emergency and the need for authoritarian political regimes to demonstrate their decisive stance to their own population could prompt them toward "pointed" regional escalation. On the one hand, the pandemic stimulates attempts to reach a political agreement against the backdrop of the impending humanitarian disaster. On the other hand, there are also opposite examples: the pandemic additionally restricts neighbouring states' cooperation opportunities. In turn, continuing armed conflicts will sharply curtail the capabilities to counteract the pandemic. Hospitals, military hospitals, outpatient clinics and other healthcare facilities often become prime targets for warring parties.

The pandemic will apparently have another consequence for regional conflicts: a changed balance between ground combat and air operations. The coronavirus particularly deters ground combat that entails close contact between large numbers of combatants susceptible to contagion. Combat aviation could conduct "sterile" raids, providing pilots with maximum protection against the infection. So, while ground combat inevitably becomes less intensive during the pandemic, air operations can be kept up at the pre-pandemic level. Accordingly, the balance of power on the battlefield tips in favour of the party that has an effective air force or support from foreign partners with relevant potential.

No one can confidently predict which of Africa's many current conflicts will be successfully resolved in the near future and which will not. It is even more dif-

difficult to guess which possible new crises and confrontations prove to be the most significant. Apparently, conflict situations will be increasingly connected with fighting for resources (including water), with the status of ethnic and denominational minorities, with managing migration flows, and with attempts to bolster one's standing on the territories of the so-called "failed states." Attempts to "internationalize" civil wars and other internal conflicts will become particularly widespread, aiming to involve both neighbouring states and claimants to regional hegemony.

The current conflicts (even if satisfactory resolutions are found) will clearly affect the African world for decades to come. It is equally apparent that many of the above-listed trends will, in some way, create additional conflict potential and generate risks of old tensions, ethnic stereotypes and historical offences being revived. African states' growing military spending and their efforts to overcome the destructive consequences of conflicts could divert the limited resources away from equally important social and environmental tasks. Simultaneously, the countries in conflict areas will lose their appeal to foreign investors. Ultimately, many African states might miss the right time to prepare for the challenges of the middle of the century. These states are in danger of facing a comprehensive development crisis they will be unable to cope with.

At the same time, Africa's relatively successful states will ponder the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons, which they will perceive as the sole guarantee of their national security. The nuclear proliferation trend will become particularly visible if the U.S. continues to wind down its security guarantees for its partners. Many African states might, however, find it a more appealing prospect to purchase chemical weapons instead of nuclear ones, since they are more accessible, less expensive and more suitable for practical use.

Africa in the 21st Century: Chinese Perspectives

For decades, Africa has been perceived in the West as a place of failure and crisis, the shadow in the age of globalization, and hence a development burden and moral challenge to the rest of the world. In the colonial era, Western powers imposed extractive political and economic institutions, disrupted the commercial unification with artificial boundaries, and led to the delay of industrial and technological developments in Africa. Since their independence, many African countries embarked on ambitious state-centred development path in the 1960s and 1970s and were forced to implement structural adjustment reforms from the 1980s onward with limited success. Africa was negatively affected by superpower competition during the Cold War and maintained asymmetrical and unequal links with former colonial powers – a pattern criticized by Kwame Nkrumah as «neo-colonialism.» In the meantime, China's solidarity and friendship with African countries emerged in the Cold War era and continues to shape China's diplomatic engagement with the continent to this day.

After the end of the Cold War, the African continent's geopolitical importance declined significantly, causing the so-called "aid fatigue" among major Western donors in the 1990s. At the same time, with the acceleration of globalization under the influence of the Washington Consensus, industrialized countries, especially the United States, had reconstructed the global industrial chains and relocated labour-intensive industries to regions with cheaper costs (such as East Asia). Due to its long history of colonization, Africa's economy suffered from an acute shortage of modern infrastructure, sophisticated industrial foundation, and strong consumer markets, and benefited little from the relocation of global industrial chains. Instead, the continent became a place for Western countries to export democracy and ideology. In contrast, once a fervent participant in the Cold War in Africa, China's return to the Africa continent since the 1990s and early 2000s has primarily focused on commercial opportunities (resources, trade, and investment) and China has refrained from political conditionalities and intervention in domestic affairs.

The beginning of the twenty-first century has witnessed a dramatic shift in international discourse about Africa. Thanks to its robust economic growth, the increasing importance of its natural resources and share of the global population, and its rapid expansion of diplomatic and commercial ties with the outside world, Africa – the once «hopeless continent»– is now being rebranded as an aspiring and hopeful one. «Africa Rising» has come to epitomize the transformative promise of what Africa will become. While sources of conflict remain in certain parts of the continent, African countries have managed to maintain overall political stability and positive economic growth over the last decade. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA), a milestone initiative of African integration and self-strengthening launched in early 2018, begins to obtain momentum toward removing tariffs and trade barriers and allowing free access to commodities, goods, and services across the continent.

It is within this context that China's growing presence and influence in Africa has instigated the «rediscovery» of Africa by other major international players. As Africa's political, economic, and strategic significance increases, governments and businesses from all around the world are rushing to the continent. Now, Africa's partners include not only traditional Western powers and China, but more importantly, emerging economies such as Russia, India, Brazil, Turkey, South Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia. This has created the so-called third surge of "Scramble for Africa" (after the Congress of Berlin in the late 19th century and the Cold War in the 20th century). Only this time, if Africa handles the "scramble" wisely, Africans themselves may be the main winners.

The COVID-19 pandemic that began in January 2020 took the entire world by surprise. This new infectious disease will certainly take a toll on human life and bring major disruptions to Africa's economy in the near future. It is likely that Africa will have to suffer its first major recession in 25 years. As of November 2020, Africa has reported over 1.7 million confirmed cases, which accounts for 3.7% of the world's total. While the risk still exists, Africa CDC's early response and governments' effective national as well as local initiatives to enforce social distance and provide assistance to marginalised populations have slowed the virus. Africa's youthful population and its past experience fighting infectious diseases such as Ebola and HIV/AIDS have also helped mitigate the devastating effects of COVID-19. This is by no means to deny that the lockdown measures designed to prevent the transmission will have negative consequences on markets and people's livelihoods. But for now, it is safe to suggest that Africa has successfully defied the COVID-19 nightmare predictions that many experts had warned about the continent at the outbreak of the pandemic.

Despite the immediate challenges of the pandemic and global economic recession, Chinese perspectives on Africa's future development remain relatively optimistic. In the following preliminary analysis of Africa's current situation, we highlight three observations related to Africa's socio-economic development, political development, and peace and security, respectively.

Africa's overall economy was on a steady growth path from the beginning of the century up to the point of COVID-19. While Africa will have to withstand the immediate impact of the recession, its commitment to regionalisation, infrastructure building, and industrialisation is irreversible. The debt threat in Africa is real, but has been exaggerated and mobilised in the international discourse to discredit China's growing influence in Africa.

African countries' management of peaceful power transfer over the last several years demonstrates their capacity and wisdom in overcoming political differences. Due to the emergence of identity politics and the pandemic shock, we will need to closely monitor Africa's political polarisation and the growing challenges facing Africa's long-term ruling parties.

The overall security situation on the continent has improved since 2015. Still, extremist Islamist groups remain active in several regions, including the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, and North Africa. Rising inequality, democratisation setbacks, and uneven urbanisation are becoming new sources of violence.

Socio-Economic Development

Africa's economy has recovered from the collapse of the commodity boom in 2015 and 2016. It achieved an overall growth of 3.2% in 2018 and 2.4% in 2019.⁸ Africa's growth is due to rising commodity prices, higher investment in infrastructure, strong private consumption, and a favourable climate. In 2018, sixteen countries in Africa recorded growth rates higher than 5%. Steady recovery is also observed in major African economies like South Africa, Nigeria, and Angola. However, COVID-19 has caused severe disruptions to Africa's growth. According to the World Bank, growth in Sub-Saharan Africa will be negative, dropping to -5.1% in 2020 in the worst scenario.⁹ This will be the first recession for Sub-Saharan Africa in 25 years. While the long-term outlook for Africa's economy remains positive, we are not sure how difficult it will be for African countries to recover from the pandemic shock. For Africa's growth trajectory, we need to continue monitoring the following three major areas: debt, industrialisation, and the COVID-19 impact.

The Debt Problem

Debt has been a major issue stifling African development since at least the 1980s. Adverse terms of international trade, international financial institutions, and inefficient fiscal management by African governments were often listed as the contributing factors. More recently, however, Chinese loans and development financing (especially in the infrastructural sector) has frequently been accused of creating "debt traps" in Africa. The debt threat is real in Africa. For example, in 2018, five African countries are in debt distress (Chad, Mozambique, South Sudan, Sudan, and Zimbabwe) and eleven face a high risk of debt distress.¹⁰

However, statistics have shown that for the majority of countries with debt distress, Chinese loans are not the main factor. According to the China-Africa Research Initiative (SAIS, Johns Hopkins University), China provided a total of USD 148 billion worth of loans to 54 African countries between 2000 and 2018.¹¹ Jubilee Debt Campaign estimated that Chinese loans in Africa are between USD 72 and 121 billion, accounting for about 20% of African countries' external debt, whereas loans from the private sector and multilateral financial institutions account for 32% and 35%, respectively.¹² Chinese loans are concentrated in several African countries, most of which are not in debt distress. Between 2000 and 2017, three African countries (Angola, Ethiopia, and Kenya) received more than USD 8 billion of loans from China and four (Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Zambia, Cameroon) received from USD 5 and 8 billion. Among the 15 countries

⁸ Assessing the Economic Impact of COVID-19 and Policy Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Africa's Pulse*. World Bank Group. 04.2020, vol. 21, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Economic Report on Africa 2019: Fiscal Policy for Financing Sustainable Development in Africa. UNECA. Addis Ababa. Ethiopia. 03.2019, p. 149.

¹¹ Brautigam D., Hwang J., Link J., Acker K. Chinese Loans to Africa Database // China Africa Research Initiative. Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.
URL: <http://www.sais-cari.org/data>

¹² Africa's Growing Debt Crisis: Who is the Debt Owed to? // Jubilee Debt Campaign. 10.2018.
URL: <https://jubileedebt.org.uk/report/africas-growing-debt-crisis-who-is-the-debt-owed-to>

identified by the IMF as facing a high risk of debt distress, only three (Djibouti, Zambia, and Cameroon) owe more than 24% of their external debt to China.¹³ Chinese government and scholars have expressed the view that Africa's debt problem has a long history and needs to be analysed case by case, and it is unfair to blame China for jeopardising Africa's debt sustainability.

The debt issue is real in Africa. However, as pointed by scholars, Africa's share is still very small in the context of global debt. It is an exaggeration to single out Africa and frame its current debt threat as a looming crisis. Things are still empirically better than the 1980s. As the COVID-19 pandemic is devastating societies and economies worldwide, Africa and other developing regions are extremely vulnerable in their response to contain the virus. Oxfam warned the world leaders to cancel at least USD 1 trillion of developing countries' debt payment in 2020. In April 2020, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed issued the first call on behalf of African leaders for emergency debt relief. In the same month, Ghana's Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta became the first high-level African official to reach out to the Chinese for debt relief. Debt cancellation will help to create the necessary fiscal space for many African governments to tackle the pandemic and reverse its negative economic impact.¹⁴ The Chinese government quickly responded and announced at the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19 on June 17, 2020, that China will cancel interest-free loans owed by African countries that are due in 2020 and will extend debt suspension to hard-hit African countries through diplomatic consultations.

Industrialisation and Job Creation

Another challenge facing African governments is that positive economic growth over the last twenty years or so has not generated adequate employment. While many African countries have experienced long growth spurts and the «Africa Rising» narrative has been celebrated widely, the growth is primarily driven by mineral resources and the commodity boom in the international market. It contradicts the East Asian experience of rapid industrialisation and structural transformation. Given the rapid growth of the youth population and urbanisation in Africa, job creation remains a daunting and urgent task for policy practitioners. For a long time, mainstream economists either looked at industrial policy with disdain or prefer a land-extensive path for development in Africa. It is not until recent years that scholars and policymakers began to believe that light manufacturing and labour-intensive industries are possible to establish in Africa.¹⁵

During his tenure as chief economist at the World Bank, Justin Yifu Lin, a professor of economics at Peking University, commissioned and published a report titled «*Light Manufacturing in Africa 2012.*» The report argued that with appro-

¹³ Yuyuan Z. China's Lending in Africa: Debates and Truth. *West Asia and Africa*. 2020, no. 1, p. 15. (In Chinese: 周玉渊:《中国在非洲债务问题的争论与真相》,《西亚非洲》,2020年第1期。)

¹⁴ Olander E. If African Leaders Expect China to Cancel Their Debts, They're probably Going to be Disappointed // *China Africa Project*. 09.04.2020.
URL: <https://chinaafricaproject.com/analysis/if-african-leaders-expect-china-to-cancel-their-debts-theyre-probably-going-to-be-disappointed/>

¹⁵ Oqubay A. *Made in Africa: Industrial Policy in Ethiopia*. Oxford University Press. 2015.

ropriate policy support, manufacturing could thrive in Africa, creating both tax revenue and employment.¹⁶ Since then, Lin has been advocating the industrial park model for Africa. For instance, Ethiopia has been successful in its effort to create export-oriented manufacturing clusters and achieve remarkable economic performance. Industrialisation is now included as a major goal in the African Union's Agenda 2063. As a result, many international observers begin to show optimism with regard to industrialisation and structural transformation in Africa.

This shift in economic thinking and policy action coincides with the influx of large numbers of Chinese companies to Africa. According to the 2017 McKinsey & Company report, there are at least 10 000 Chinese companies in Africa, 90% of which are privately owned and a third of which are in the manufacturing sector.¹⁷ Africa currently has about 10 million manufacturing jobs. As China undergoes industrial upgrading, it will release 85 million manufacturing jobs to the developing world, which gives Africa a historical opportunity to attract manufacturing investment and create manufacturing jobs.¹⁸ If successful, Africa may become "the next factory of the world." Countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, and Nigeria have already shown strong growth in their manufacturing sectors. Of course, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has put a big question mark on the prospect for Africa's industrialisation and FDI inflow. Whether industrialisation projects in various African countries will lead to sustained job creation remains to be seen.

Covid, Commodities, and Food Crisis

Despite its late arrival in Africa, COVID-19 will cause a major decline in economic growth for the continent. The World Bank estimated that Africa's growth rate will be between -2.1% and -5.1% in 2020.¹⁹ The pandemic will certainly hit the Sub-Saharan region's three largest economies – Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola. South Africa now has the largest number of confirmed cases; all three countries have mega-cities that are at high risk in the face of COVID-19's spread. This takes place in a context of weak investment and already declining commodity prices over the last two years. It is likely that the prices of most commodities, such as crude oil and minerals, may continue to fall or stagnate as the world plummets into recession, which makes the prospect for Africa's economic recovery difficult in the short term. The COVID-19 pandemic will also cause disruptions in food supply chains and create a food crisis in Africa. Considering the density of Africa's major cities, food shortage will cause devastating humanitarian crises. Debt relief and emergency food aid will be critical for many African countries to preserve economic and social stability in 2020 and 2021.

¹⁶ Oqubay A. *Made in Africa: Industrial Policy in Ethiopia*. Oxford University Press. 2015. p. 6.

¹⁷ Sun I., Jayaram K., Kassiri O. *Dance of the Lions and Dragons* // McKinsey & Company. 06.2017.
URL: <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Featured%20Insights/Middle%20East%20and%20Africa/The%20closest%20look%20yet%20at%20Chinese%20economic%20engagement%20in%20Africa/Dance-of-the-lions-and-dragons.aspx>

¹⁸ Lin J.Y. *The Rise of China and Opportunities for Africa*. Annual Review of African Studies in China. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press. 2014, p. 29. (In Chinese: 林毅夫: 《中国的崛起与非洲的机遇》, 《中国非洲研究评论 2013》, 社科文献出版社, 2014年。)

¹⁹ *Assessing the Economic Impact of COVID-19 and Policy Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Africa's Pulse. World Bank Group. 04. 2020, vol. 21, p. 1.

Political Development

In the last three years, more than 15 Sub-Saharan African countries held general elections. It is fair to conclude that although some elections underwent controversies and experienced certain degrees of political and social turmoil, the overall transfer of political power in Africa has been successful. Notable examples include Cameroon, Sierra Leon, Mali, Madagascar, DRC, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa. Even in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, Gabon, and Zimbabwe, where we saw unexpected turbulence in the transfer of political power, the results have been largely peaceful and satisfactory. Extreme violence and large-scale riots have been avoided. Successful management of such crises is a testament to the capacity and wisdom of Africans in overcoming their political challenges. As we move forward, we should pay close attention to rising challenges facing Africa's traditional ruling parties and political polarisation in Africa.

Challenges to traditional ruling parties

Many African countries have been under the rule of one political leader for prolonged periods of time. For example, the leaders of Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, Gabon, Cameroon, Chad, Burundi, Uganda, and Eritrea have or had been in power for decades and are often backed by political organisations and well-controlled militaries. However, incumbent rulers and «old man politics» in Africa have been under unprecedented pressure in recent years. This shift can be attributed to several simultaneous developments. On the one hand, African countries are experiencing what scholars have called «the triple transition» – uneven economic transition, social transformation, and the rise of populist movements. The government's lack of capacity in coping with the triple transition generates political criticism and social resistance, both from within the ruling parties and from the society at large. Unexpected changes of government and transfers of power in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Ethiopia are notable examples.

On the other hand, recent years also begin to witness the rise of a new generation of politicians as opposition leaders in Africa. For instance, Bobi Wine in Uganda, Diane Rwigara in Rwanda, Julius Malema and Mmusi Maimane in South Africa, Nelson Chamisa in Zimbabwe, and above all, Abiy Ahmed in Ethiopia significantly challenge the entrenched old political system.²⁰ Most of them are in their mid-30s or early 40s and are often extremely popular among the urban educated youth. Undoubtedly, this emerging wave of young politicians and activists may effect radical political changes at home and reshape Africa's foreign policies.

Political Fragmentation and Polarisation

As has been argued by political theorist Francis Fukuyama in his 2018 book «*Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*» that globalisation in the first two decades of the new century has produced extremely uneven development and economic inequality worldwide, causing profound changes

²⁰ Africa's young leaders face a testing 2020 // The Guardian. 31.12.2019.
URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/31/africas-young-leaders-face-a-testing-2020>

in politics.²¹ The left-right spectrum of politics appears to be giving way to the politics of identity. Political parties begin to mobilise or promote the interest of groups who were perceived as being marginalised, such as immigrants, women, the LGBT communities, and refugees. In Africa, issues of immigration, race and ethnicity, women, youth, and LGBT are also beginning to transform the political landscapes and cause uncertainties in elections to come.

Identity politics has the potential to further divide society in Africa, resulting in political polarisation. For example, in South Africa's 2019 general election, though the ANC still won 57.5% of the votes, it is the lowest support rate in all six elections since 1994. The EFF and the FF+, two small parties on the radical left and radical right, respectively, gained significantly more votes, which is an indication of South Africa's social and political polarisation. As uneven economic growth, high unemployment rates continue to haunt many African countries and cause widening socio-economic inequality, social and political polarisation is expected to exacerbate in Africa, at least in the near future.

Another negative consequence of identity politics in Africa is the rise of xenophobic sentiment. Xenophobic attacks against migrants and foreign businesses resurfaced in South Africa in 2019. Unlike the previous spates of xenophobic attacks, this time, it also expanded to Nigeria, resulting in reprisal attacks that led to looting and destruction of South African-originated businesses in Nigeria. Outbreaks of xenophobic violence in the two wealthiest African countries are worrisome. As the shock of COVID-19 pandemic begins to be felt in Africa, we may see another surge of discrimination and violence against foreigners and various already marginalised groups in society. Among them, Chinese migrants in Africa can be vulnerable and their properties and businesses can become targets in such attacks. More importantly, opposition politicians in transitional countries without consolidated and mature multiparty democracies will be tempted to mobilise anti-Chinese populism for political purposes (as we have seen in Zambia before).

Peace and Security

The security situation in Africa has improved significantly since 2015. According to a report released by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, the death toll of terrorist attacks in Africa has dropped from 18 782 in 2015 to 9 437 in 2018.²² The fight against extremist Jihadist groups such as Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria has made significant progress; peace talks between the Kirt government and rebellion groups in South Sudan have led to the first promising peace agreement in 2018; U.S. airstrikes against Al-Shabaab in Somalia over the last two years have weakened the group in major strategic locations, and most importantly, Prime Minister Abiy initiated the first Ethiopia-Eritrea summit in two decades to sign the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship and re-establish diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries.

²¹ Fukuyama F. *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 2018.

²² *Progress and Setbacks in the Fight against African Militant Islamist Groups in 2018* // Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 25.01.2019.

URL: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/progress-and-setbacks-in-the-fight-against-african-militant-islamist-groups-in-2018>

However, terrorist groups and organised crime continue to grow and threaten regional security and stability in several concentrated areas. Places including the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, North Africa, and Mozambique have exhibited sharp increases in violent activities.²³ Recent evidence suggests that the coronavirus will pose further challenges and complications on existing peace and security threats and responses in Africa because of loss of lives and livelihoods, risks of food shortages, halting of peace operations, and the surge of gender-based violence.

The Sahel Region

While the overall security situation improves in Africa, the Sahel region continues to be inflicted by terrorism, wars, and violence. According to the United Nations, the displaced population grew from 3.2 million in 2018 to 4.2 million in 2019 in the region.²⁴ Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger are the five most affected countries. This situation can be traced back to the Mali Crisis in 2012. As the security situation deteriorated in the region, the five countries established the G5 Sahel Joint Force, a collective institutional framework to fight terrorism and rebuild regional peace. The organisation received recognition and support from the international society, including the AU, ECOWAS, UN, France, and EU.

More recently, the G5 Sahel Joint Force adopted a more comprehensive approach to regional security and embraced development as a tool to eradicate terrorism and poverty. It announced a five-year plan (2018–2022) to promote the energy and agricultural sectors in the region and create jobs for its youth. The Sahel Alliance, launched in 2017 by France, Germany, and the European Union, has promised to fund more than 600 projects in the region, worth a total of EUR 9 billion.²⁵ In the meantime, the G5 Sahel Joint Force is in great need of funding to perform its military and non-military operations. In 2014, it budgeted for USD 423 million to operate. Only a quarter of the total has been received by mid-2018, which has caused delays and deficiencies in training and equipment for the organisation.²⁶ Due to the funding shortage, whether and how the G5 Sahel Joint Force will be effective in peace building remains to be examined. Although China has become increasingly active in the Mali crisis, its approach remains largely government-focused and Bamako-centred.²⁷ While China's contribution to the peacekeeping mission and development work in Mali has been recognised and appreciated, its impact on the overall security situation in the Sahel region remains limited.

²³ African Militant Islamist Groups Set Record for Violent Activity // Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 21.07.2019.
URL: <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/african-militant-islamist-groups-new-record-violent-activity/>

²⁴ Persistent Needs in the Sahel, Conflict Driving Massive Displacement // UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 06.03.2019.
URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/persistent-needs-sahel-conflict-driving-massive-displacement>

²⁵ G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Sahel Alliance // French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. 06.2019.
URL: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/crises-and-conflicts/g5-sahel-joint-force-and-the-sahel-alliance/>

²⁶ Coordinated Response Key to G5 Sahel Joint Force Success // Relief Web. 19.06.2018.
URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/coordinated-response-key-g5-sahel-joint-force-success>

²⁷ L.Benabdallah, D. Large. Development, Security, and China's Evolving Role in Mali // China Africa Research Initiative. School of Advanced International Studies. Johns Hopkins University. 2020, no 40.
URL: <http://www.sais-cari.org/publications>

Changing Drivers of Conflict and Violence

Conventional drivers of conflict and violence include factors such as poverty, ethnicity, extremism, and weak state institutions. However, new economic, political, and demographic developments begin to change the nature of violence and insecurity in Africa, forcing us to update our thinking on the issue.²⁸ First, while Africa's recent robust growth has helped reduce the overall poverty rates, the absolute number of people living in poverty continues to rise in many countries as a result of rapid population growth and unequal distribution of wealth. Rising inequality in Africa not only reshapes group identities as suggested before, but also constitutes a risk for intra-state conflict and decentralised forms of violence.

Second, though democratisation since the 1990s has extended political and civil rights across the continent, incomplete democratisation fuels other forms of violence. For example, under the recently established electoral systems, people have increased expectations of the elected government. Under such circumstances, democratic setbacks such as manipulations of presidential term limits and weak governance such as poor service delivery, corruption, and discriminatory policies will nurture violence more easily.²⁹ In addition, smartphones, access to the internet, and the use of social media can spread information in ways that are out of the government's control.

Third, rapid and uneven urbanisation in Africa has created multiple mega-cities with large slum areas. Today, Africa's urbanisation rate is already over 40%. With a predominantly young urban population and high unemployment rates, cities become the breeding ground for mobilisations and riots. Individuals and groups living in urban poverty are at a higher risk for supporting and participating in violent organisations.

Impact of COVID-19

The coronavirus will pose further challenges and complications on Africa's security as the pandemic leads to loss of lives and livelihoods, threats of food shortages, halting of peace operations, and the surge of gender-based violence. Among all African countries, a dozen of them will be the hardest hit. The Africa Centre for Strategic Studies recently published an assessment of the vulnerability of African countries in times of the pandemic, using nine risk factors that include international exposure, health system, urban density, urban population, population age, government transparency, press freedom, conflict magnitude, and displacement populations. According to the report, the top ten most vulnerable countries are South Sudan, DRC, Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, CAR, Somalia, and Chad. Several of these countries are already affected by various forms of conflict and violence. As a virus that spreads through close physical contact and respiratory droplets, COVID-19 poses critical challenges to Africa's mega-cities as well. Over half of Africa's urban population (more than 200 million people) is concentrated in informal neighbourhoods with limited access to water

²⁸ Soest C., Alexander De J., *Dealing with New Security Threats in Africa*. GIGA Focus. 05. 2018, no 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

and sanitation. With a shortage of face masks, clean water, and food for the urban poor, African cities may serve as deadly incubators for the virus. Chances of large-scale social unrest are slim, but we may see sporadic violence and protests across the continent.

Part II. Assessing China and Russia's Interests and Goals in Africa

China's Interests and Goals in Africa

China's Experience in Africa

China's presence in independent Africa has evolved historically from the 1960s, and one can distinguish at least three qualitative phases. The first two decades of African independence in the 1960s and 1970s comprise the first phase, when China as a Third World country expressed solidarity with the non-aligned movement, supported revolutionary organisations, and built significant aid projects like the TAZARA railway. In the 1980s, as China opened its economy to the world, it retreated from major aid projects in Africa and stressed the principle of mutual benefits in its economic cooperation with Africa. The late 1980s and 1990s represent the second phase, when China used selective investment and vigorous diplomatic outreach to break international isolation (especially after 1989). The current engagement since the late 1990s and early 2000 constitutes the third phase. As China and Chinese companies «open up to the world,» the past two decades have witnessed China's emergence as the second-largest economy and the exponential growth of China's engagement with Africa. The establishment of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 has served as the principal platform for China's cooperation with Africa. China became Africa's largest trading partner in 2009. As of 2017, China is in the top five partners for Africa on trade, investment stock, investment growth, aid, and infrastructure financing. By all measures, China has emerged as one of Africa's most important development partners.

China's current presence in Africa has no easy historical precedent because it engages with Africa at three different levels simultaneously. At the top level are the Chinese state and Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs), usually involved in aid diplomacy, peacekeeping operations, and mega-projects in mining and infrastructure. At the middle level, numerous private Chinese companies are actively investing and operating in Africa. According to the 2017 McKinsey report cited before, among the 10 000+ Chinese firms in Africa, over 90% are privately owned. While these companies are creating numerous much-needed jobs on the ground, they also produce interesting labour relations and complex socio-economic dynamics with local governments and communities. Finally, at the bottom level, Africa now is home to more than a million Chinese migrants. These migrants consist of Chinese SOE professionals and employees, private investors and traders, and even illegal sojourners such as prostitutes brought through snakehead migration schemes. Therefore, making sense of these three groups of Chinese actors' differing agendas is crucial to understanding China's overall interests in Africa.

If China's return to Africa in the 1990s was driven primarily by its search for resources and markets and its efforts to break international isolation, its ties with Africa over the last two decades have generated new dynamics. China has increasingly transformed as Africa's creditor, industrialisation promoter, and peacekeeper.³⁰ This role shift is not only indicative of the deepening of China's engagement in the continent but also producing challenges for China as it wants to present an alternative choice of development to African countries. Scholars have suggested that in all three areas, China and Africa will undergo profound changes in terms of how China perceives and protects its interests in Africa, including its numerous firms and citizens on the ground.³¹ It might not be a total surprise if China, in the near future, adjusts or modifies its long-standing principles and practices such as the absence of conditionalities in loans and aid grants, resource-centric engagement, and non-interference in domestic affairs.

General Principles and Goals of China's Africa Policy

According to China's second *Africa Policy Paper* released at the Johannesburg Summit of the FACAC meeting in 2015, China will uphold "the Values of Friendship, Justice and Shared Interests and Adhering to the Principles of Sincerity, Practical Results, Affinity and Good Faith."

"Sincerity" means China insists on the principles of equality, mutual trust, solidarity and mutual support, and will always be Africa's most trustworthy friend and sincere partner.

"Practical results" means that China aims to achieve practical and efficient results, seeks cooperation and mutual benefits, upholds the principle of honouring commitments with real actions and results, implements the guidelines and measures for mutually beneficial cooperation with Africa to the letter, and strives to realise the common development of China and Africa while helping Africa achieve independent development.

"Affinity" means the hearts of Chinese and African people are connected, and they will live together in harmony, promote intercultural dialogue, and enhance exchanges of ideas, policy alignment and mutual understanding to provide a solid popular and social basis for China-Africa friendship.

"Good faith" means China cherishes good faith and settlement of problems in an appropriate manner.³²

The four principles outlined above characterise China's engagement with Africa and differentiate China-Africa relations from historical colonialism and contemporary Western approaches. *Africa Policy Paper* made no mention of China's «goal» or «strategy» in Africa. In fact, scholars from both within and without China have already commented on China's apparent lack of a coherent grand strategy in Africa. It is plausible to suggest, perhaps, that the lack of a unified

³⁰ Alden C., Jiang L. Brave New World: Debt, Industrialisation and Security in China-Africa Relations. *International Affairs*, 2019, vol. 95, no. 3, pp. 641-657.

³¹ Ibid.

³² China's Second Africa Policy Paper // China.org. 05.12.2015.
URL: http://www.china.org.cn/world/2015-12/05/content_37241677.htm

strategy is indicative of the rapidly involving nature of China-Africa relations and, therefore, allows a certain degree of flexibility and creativity in China's policy actions. Nevertheless, the Chinese government has thus far practised three principles relatively consistently when interacting with African countries. They are (1) the one-China principle, (2) unconditionality attached to preferential loans and aid, and (3) non-interference in domestic affairs.

Though China traditionally relied on a bilateral approach in its diplomacy toward Africa, the Chinese government has recently expressed that it welcomes constructive actions of the international community to support Africa and is willing to strengthen cooperation with other countries as well as international and regional organisations on the basis of the "Africa-proposed, Africa-agreed and Africa-led" principle. Looking forward, China will explore "tripartite and multilateral cooperation in Africa so as to jointly contribute to peace, stability and development on the continent."³³ This would certainly include China-Russia-Africa trilateral cooperation in the future.

Political Cooperation

The one-China principle is the political precondition and foundation of establishing and developing relations between China, as well as countries and regional organisations in Africa. The one-China policy is also China's core national interest. China is willing to develop diplomatic relations with the countries that do not establish official relations with Taiwan. As of 2020, Swatini (formerly known as Swaziland) is the only remaining African state that maintains formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

In addition to the Taiwan issue, friendship diplomacy with Africa also advances China's political cooperation with Africa in three other areas. First, China needs African governments for mutual understanding and political support on issues and debates internationally. For instance, African countries have always given China necessary support at the UN and other international institutions on issues such as the South China Sea Arbitration and human rights accusations related to Xinjiang, Tibet, and recently, Hong Kong.

Second, as China's influence and economic interests continue to increase in Africa, it is in China's general political interest to expand friendly ties with African people and politicians through people-to-people exchanges. Scholars have detected at least five methods adopted by the Chinese government in promoting its relationship with African politicians (including opposition politicians) to maintain a political friendship with African countries.³⁴ They are party exchanges, material support, cadre training, opposition party outreach, and interparliamentary exchanges. These international outreach activities are generally successful and greatly supplement China's formal diplomacy. In the long-term, this strategy will help cultivate personal relationships that open new opportunities for Chinese foreign policymakers and enhance China-Africa political cooperation.

³³ China's Second Africa Policy Paper // China.org. 05.12.2015.
URL: http://www.china.org.cn/world/2015-12/05/content_37241677.htm

³⁴ Shinn D., Eisenman J. *China and Africa: A Century of Engagement*. University of Pennsylvania Press. 2012, pp. 68-85.

Third, at the global level, China and African countries collaborate to safeguard multilateralism against unilateralism and protectionism on behalf of the developing countries. In multilateral platforms, including the UN, China and Africa enhance their coordination and cooperation and push for a fair international political and economic order.

Economic Cooperation

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the FOCAC mechanism. Until the turn of the 21st century, China had remained a negligible partner for Africa's economic development. China-Africa economic cooperation picked up after 2000 when the first FOCAC meeting was held in Beijing, which corresponded to China's rapidly increased economic power and global influence in the 21st century. Now, China is in the top five countries for Africa on trade, investment stock, investment growth, aid, and infrastructure financing, and has become, arguably, Africa's most important overall development partner. The key to China's success is that it sees Africa as not just a place for aid and piecemeal development projects but as a place of opportunity. In many ways, China-Africa cooperation has already become a model for enhancing the mutually beneficial cooperation between China and other developing countries, and it also reflects China's image of being a responsible great power.

First, trade and investment have been significant markers for the achievement of China-Africa economic cooperation. China emerged as Africa's largest trade partner in 2009. Its trade with Africa increased from USD 1 billion in 2000 to an astounding USD 200 billion in 2012. The volume fluctuated due to weak commodity prices between 2014 and 2016 and climbed from 2017 onward, exceeding USD 200 billion again in 2019. Reportedly, China gets a third of its oil and natural resources from Africa. On investment, China's annual FDI toward Africa is over USD 3 billion. By 2020, China's accumulative FDI stock in Africa has reached USD 110 billion, making it also Africa's largest investor.³⁵ While the coronavirus pandemic will have a negative impact on China-Africa trade and investment, it won't reverse the positive trajectory in the long term.

Second, infrastructure and industrialisation have become the two most promising fields of China-Africa economic cooperation with immense potential to transform Africa's economic landscape. By 2020, China has assisted Africa in constructing over 6000 km of railways, 6000 km of roads, 20 ports, 80 major power facilities, 130 medical facilities and hospitals, 45 sports stadiums, and 170 schools, not to mention other government buildings.³⁶ Apart from just roads and railways, China's Huawei company, for example, has been actively helping 40 African countries roll out 21st-century communications networks.³⁷ As Africa is dedicated to strengthening its regional transportation and telecommunication network, China will continue to work with African countries to modernise their developmental infrastructure.

³⁵ Anshan L. FOCAC at Twenty: Process, Achievements, and Reflection. *Contemporary World* 2020, no. 10. (In Chinese: 李安山:《中非合作论坛二十周年:历程、成就与思考》,《当代世界》2020年第10期。

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ What China's influence in Africa means for the global economy // Quartz Africa.
URL: <https://qz.com/africa/1915217/what-china-s-africa-role-means-for-the-global-economy/>

Meanwhile, over 10 000 Chinese companies now invest and operate in Africa. While labour disputes and competition with local industries exist, the employment opportunities, technological transfers, and tax revenues created by Chinese firms will benefit the society at large. Many Chinese companies, both state-owned and privately owned, collaborate with African governments and local business partners to establish industrial parks and special economic zones.

Third, public health will likely be the next central area for China-Africa cooperation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. China has a long history of providing medical support to Africa. Since the 1960s, China has thus far sent over 210 000 doctors and medical workers to 42 African countries, and a total of 2 200 000 000 African patients (in person-times) have received treatment from Chinese medical teams.³⁸ During the coronavirus pandemic, China immediately shared its experience with Africa CDC and dispatched expert teams in at least 12 African countries and provided medical equipment and supplies to at least 50 African countries. At the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity against COVID-19 in June 2020, China promised to prioritise public health in the next phase of implementing the FOCAC action plans. President Xi has announced that China will speed up the construction of the Africa CDC headquarters and the China-Africa Friendship Hospitals and the cooperation between paired-up Chinese and African hospitals.³⁹ China and Africa will also work together to guarantee equitable access to the coronavirus vaccine once it becomes available.

Finally, areas such as agriculture and education (including talents training) will remain important. For instance, China has established 23 agricultural technology demonstration centres across Africa to transfer Chinese agricultural technologies and promote Africa's agribusiness.⁴⁰ As African countries proactively seek agricultural cooperation with China in the post-pandemic era, China will have a bigger responsibility in ensuring global food security. On the issue of education, China hosts around 50 000 African students per year, ranking second only to France as the largest destination for students from African countries. Although government-sponsored scholarships and the Confucius institutes are instrumental in attracting African students, the majority of African students in China are self-funded and come to China to study medicine, business management, government, and other social sciences subjects. During the last five years, China also has provided talents training programs for over 200 000 Africans.⁴¹

Peace and Security

Security became an official policy area in China-Africa relations only in 2012 when the China-Africa Partnership for Peace and Security was announced at the fifth

³⁸ Xinhuanet. // News.cn.
 URL: <http://www.xinhuanet.com/>

³⁹ Joint Statement of the Extraordinary China-Africa Summit On Solidarity Against COVID-19 // China Daily. 18.06.2020.
 URL: <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202006/18/WS5eeb156aa310834817253f70.html>

⁴⁰ Xiaoyun L. et al. Demonstration of New Development. Social Sciences Academic Press. 2017. (In Chinese: 李小云等:《新发展的示范》, 社会科学文献出版社, 2017年。)

⁴¹ Anshan L. FOCAC at Twenty: Process, Achievements, and Reflection // Contemporary World 2002, no. 10. (In Chinese: 李安山:《中非合作论坛二十周年: 历程、成就与思考》,《当代世界》2020年第10期。)

FOCAC meeting amidst turmoil in North Africa. However, China's security cooperation with Africa dates back to the Cold War era when China supported African independence movements and revolutionary groups. China's policy toward Africa became more pragmatic during the reform era. Since the 1990s, China has actively supported UN and AU peacekeeping operations in Africa. While China will never seek hegemony or military expansion in Africa, it has taken careful steps to better place itself to protect Chinese firms and citizens on the continent. These actions include combating the Somali piracy, evacuation effort in Libya, and the recent leasing of a base in the port of Djibouti. Compared to countries like the United States, France, and Russia, China's military presence and engagement in Africa is still negligible.

However, China's current security engagement in Africa is important in two areas. First is China's commitment to peacekeeping. This year marks the 30th anniversary of China's participation in UN peacekeeping missions. So far, China has sent over 40 000 peacekeepers to 25 missions, established an 8 000-strong peacekeeping standby force, and has over 2 500 blue helmets in eight missions worldwide in 2020, making it the largest contributor of peacekeepers among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁴² Moreover, China has built three facilities, two in Beijing and one in Nanjing, to engage in peacekeeping training. It has trained close to 3 000 peacekeepers for 60 countries.⁴³ China's participation in peacekeeping operations is welcomed by the international community, allows China to respond to African requests and presents China as a responsible great power.

Second is China's emphasis on the importance of economic development in preventing armed conflict and achieving peace. This is referred to as the «development-security nexus» or «developmental peace» in international discourse and scholarly discussion.⁴⁴ The concept was based on an approach to security in which economic growth and win-win are central. More importantly, it represents a departure from the Western idea of liberal peace and placed China as the «norm-setting power» in peace and security issues. For instance, China is openly critical of France's military intervention in Mali. China's own engagement with Mali includes major development projects, scholarship and training programs, and participation in the peacekeeping operation MINUSMA. China contributed 426 members deployed to Mali; only 170 are soldiers. Others are mainly engineers and medical staff tasked with hospital construction in Mali.⁴⁵ As «developmental peace» is tested and put into practice in African countries, whether China's approach can effectively engage and build trust with a multitude of actors involved in the conflict will be crucial to its success.

⁴² China's Armed Forces: 30 Years of UN Peacekeeping Operations // Xinhua. 18.09.2020.
URL: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/18/c_139376725.htm

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lei X. China's development-oriented Peacekeeping Strategy in Africa, in Chris Alden et al. (eds.) *China and Africa: Building Peace and Security Cooperation on the Continent*. Palgrave Macmillan U.S. 2017, pp. 83-99.

⁴⁵ Benabdallah L., Large D. Development, Security, and China's Evolving Role in Mali. Working Paper 2020, no. 40. China Africa Research Initiative, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.
URL: <http://www.sais-cari.org/publications>

Russia's Interests and Goals in Africa

The year 2019 was a turning point for Russia-Africa relations. Although interest had been growing for years, the first Russia-Africa Summit served as a catalyst for intensified cooperation, with a wide array of trade deals, memorandums of understanding (MoU), partnership agreements and other formal arrangements being concluded. Although Africa fell off the Russian foreign policy agenda during the challenging period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, interest has been growing slowly but steadily, reaching its peak last year.

In the last edition of the *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* published in 2016, Africa was ranked second to last in Russia's diplomatic priorities, only before Latin America. In addition, a proposal to "reinforce the common interests-based comprehensive cooperation" was introduced in the 2016 Concept. This addition underlined Russia's interest in promoting comprehensive win-win cooperation with the continent.

Currently, Russia does not have a single, unified strategy for cooperation with Africa. Nonetheless, the Final Declaration of the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit can be viewed as somewhat of an orienteer. Whether the absence of such a strategy serves an obstacle or opportunity is debatable. On the one hand, Russia has more space for manoeuvre, not being limited to the predetermined roadmaps of a strategy. On the other hand, the lack of a strategy might lead to a lack of structure and make it harder for Russia to act in a consecutive manner.

Another important pillar of Russian cooperation with Africa is the narrative of underlining the «common history» of the continent and the former USSR. For example, the Final Declaration of the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit stated that the Russian Federation and representatives of the leading economic regional organisations in Africa are focused on «building on the friendly ties between the Russian Federation and African States, the traditions of joint struggle for decolonisation and independence of African States, as well as the rich experience of multifaceted and mutually beneficial cooperation that serves the interests of our peoples.» Additionally, Russia has been betting on the desire of Africans to become truly independent, both politically and economically. Another key message relayed during the October summit was "building fair partnership relations based on equality and mutual practical interest," as stated by the Russian president in an interview during the run-up to the event. He went on to state, "... we do not make our support and joint development projects which we offer contingent upon the fulfilment of political or any other preconditions or so-called 'exclusive', but in fact enslaving trade and economic preferences; we do not impose our views, respecting the principle of African solutions to African problems proposed by the Africans themselves." Such an approach seems to have found a positive response amongst Africans and has therefore become one of the cornerstones of the Russian strategy for Africa.

Russia and Africa's Political Cooperation

There are logical and well-founded grounds for Russia's strengthening interaction with Africa. Russia has always endeavoured to conduct multi-vector diplomacy. Thus, given its deteriorating post-2014 relations with Western partners, Moscow began to actively diversify its contacts in foreign politics and trade. This includes the African continent.

Politically, Russia and African states are kindred in their commitment to the polycentric world order. This means that both Russia and the African continent prefer the world to have multiple interacting power centres, each moving along its unique political, economic and social development track, instead of two or three power centres whose interrelations (be they friendly or hostile) determine the global development vectors in all other regions. For instance, the "Going It Alone? Trade Policy after Three Years of Populism" report (2019) prepared by the independent Global Trade Alert Centre notes that the U.S.-China trade conflict cost the global economy almost a quarter of its expected growth, which had slowed down to its minimum since the start of the global crisis. In absolute figures, these losses equal 40% of the entire sub-Saharan Africa's GDP.⁴⁶

Both Russia and Africa consistently advocate non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs and the priority of national sovereignty. This issue is very important for African states as they are wary of neo-colonialism; Russia does not have a colonial past and has always supported African states in their anti-colonial struggle; consequently, African states view Russia as a protector of sovereignty. In this area, Russia has capabilities in which Africa is interested: for instance, Russia is already assisting several African states in bolstering their technological sovereignty given the continent's increasing digitisation. Key issues in ensuring technological sovereignty are providing for African governments to control the collection, storage and use of highly sensitive data (such as geo-information data, data on key infrastructure facilities and territories) and software control.

As for international relations, Russia endeavours to strengthen political cooperation with African states with a view to coordinating approaches to various international affairs. For instance, African states constitute a large and influential group in the UN. Russia and African states have a significant mutual understanding and they frequently support Russia at international forums and organisations. For instance, at the UN General Assembly's session on December 19 2017, 70 states supported Ukraine's anti-Russian resolution aggressively promoted by the U.S. while 76 states abstained and 26 voted against. Only three African states voted «for» the resolution (Botswana, Liberia, and the Seychelles). 33 states abstained, including Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, and Nigeria, while 12 states did not vote, including Djibouti, Morocco, Somalia, and Tunisia.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ The 25th Global Trade Alert Report. Going It Alone? Trade policy after Three Years of Populism // Global Trade Alert. 22.12.2019.
URL: <https://www.globaltradealert.org/reports/48>

⁴⁷ Urnov A.Y. U.S.–Africa: The Trump Administration's Policies. 2017–2019 (in Russian). Moscow. Institute for African Studies RAS, 2020.

The First Russia-Africa Summit, which was held in October 2019, provided a powerful impetus to both bilateral and multilateral political relations with African states. Its participants adopted a joint declaration determining the goals and objectives of subsequent development of Russia-Africa cooperation in every dimension: politics, security, the economy, science, technology, culture, and the humanitarian area. The declaration also introduced a new dialogue venue: the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum with a regular, triannual Russia-Africa Summit as its supreme authority. The declaration also stipulated that, between Forums, the Russian Federation would hold annual political consultations between Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia and the African countries taking current, past and future chairmanship of the African Union.⁴⁸

A Memorandum of Understanding on economic cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and the African Union Commission (AUC) was also signed at the Summit. It should be noted that Russia and African states have also stepped up their inter-parliamentary contacts. The Russia-Africa public forum has been held since 2018. Through a series of initiatives, Russia endeavours to project its “soft power,” the appeal of the Russian culture, science and education on to the African continent. Russia uses its own media to raise Africans’ awareness of the true state of Russian politics and the Russian economy in order to prevent the “crooked mirror” of Western media from distorting this information. Yet, much remains to be done there. Russia has a critical need to boost its information presence in Africa and to have its own media space paint a deeper and fuller picture of the realities of life on the African continent.

Currently, Russia is one of the key global security providers. Given today’s turbulent international relations, Russia’s particular appeal lies in its commitment to boosting peace and security and its practical contribution to achieving and preserving both. Russia can protect other states’ political sovereignty and undertake successful conflict resolution efforts, as evidenced by Russia’s Syrian policies. In addition to weapons, Russia has security technologies that could already now significantly improve the security architecture in Africa and have an immediate effect in resolving many of the African states’ security issues.

Russia makes it clear that it is ready for political and economic cooperation with all willing African states. As a foreign political partner, Russia can balance out the influence of other foreign actors and thus often help its African partners gain more alternatives in shaping their own foreign policy. Even though Russia-Africa political cooperation is currently developing in a dynamic and rather successful vein, Russia still has to arrive at a more strategic and systemic conceptualisation of its political interaction with African states.

Russia’s Economic Agenda in Africa

In 2018-2019, Russia-Africa relations visibly intensified. Even so, for historical reasons, they are still somewhat slanted: North Africa still accounts for 80%

⁴⁸ Outcomes of the first Russia–Africa Summit and Economic Forum. Roscongress to continue working on the African track until the next Forum // Roscongress. 28.10.2019.

URL: <https://roscongress.org/en/news/podvedeny-itogi-pervogo-sammita-i-ekonomicheskogo-foruma-rossija-afrika-roskongress-prodolzhit-rabotu-na-afrikanskom-treke-v-period-do-sledujushchego-foruma/>

of Russia's foreign trade turnover with African states. It remains an important objective to build up trade and economic ties with sub-Saharan Africa. Previously established and newly created intergovernmental commissions composed of representatives of Russia and African states, chambers of commerce, and business circles of Russia and African countries serve as venues for active efforts in the area. Since 2018, the Ministry for Economic Development has been holding annual representative Russia-Africa conferences on developing business ties and trade with the continent.

The economic dimension of Russia's African policy is pragmatic. Russian manufacturers are looking for new markets for their goods and services, and they are also interested in Africa's mineral resources and tropical agriculture products. Additionally, work is being done to increase exports to Africa of Russian-made fertilisers, engineering products, equipment, pharmaceuticals, etc.

Russia is interested in producing and/or purchasing mineral resources in African states, since Russia has a shortage of certain resources because its own deposits are being exhausted, while new deposits are difficult to explore and develop, and also because, following the collapse of the USSR, Russia lost access to some crucial resources. Africa, on the contrary, is rich in unique natural resources with a relatively low production cost. Geologically, African territories have not yet been fully explored and Russia here provides important services in geo-exploration and plotting of mineral resources. Importantly, Russia has a competitive edge in the quality and price of the services offered; therefore, cooperation in the area has excellent prospects.

In the last decade, relevant Russian businesses have become visible players in exploring and developing Africa's hydrocarbons and mineral resources. Gazprom, Rosneft, Lukoil, Renova, Rusal, Severstal, and Nordgold are active on the continent. Russian companies in Africa are very flexible and, as foreign investors, they boost their social responsibility and take part in establishing value-added chains and in transitioning, in some cases, from resource processing to manufacturing finished goods.

Recently, Russia-Africa cooperation in agriculture and agri-business has been actively expanding. Russia is interested in tropical agriculture's products (coffee, tea, cocoa, citrus fruits). African states have increased sales of fruit and vegetables to Russia, largely replacing EU state products. Additionally, Russia has been actively exporting its own agricultural products to Africa (grain remains the principal exported commodity, but the Ministry of Agriculture plans to increase several fold exports of flour, animal husbandry products, agricultural machinery and equipment by 2024-2025).

Russia is also interested in exporting its services and technologies, for instance, digital and technological solutions, know-how in the construction of NPPs and other infrastructure facilities (hydropower plants, factories, light industry and agro-processing enterprises), oil refining and pipeline construction technologies, and space technologies and services (such as launching African states' satellites).

Africans are interested in Russian goods and services but even more so in Russian investment, particularly in the infrastructure and industrial projects, in science, healthcare, and human resource training. Africa has a tremendous "infrastructure hunger": half of the continent's population have no regular access to electric power. Rosatom's experience can be in great demand here, as the company is the global leader in building NPPs. Africa wants to develop nuclear energy: out of 30 states planning to build NPPs, 10 are African ones. Rosatom has helped build research reactors in Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Morocco, and Nigeria.

Ambitious projects have been drawn out within the framework of the International Agency for Sovereign Development. The agency, which was established in 2019 to assist governments of developing countries, including African states, focuses on facilitating the implementation of economic reforms, raising funds on international capital markets and unlocking the potential of increasing shareholder value of the largest corporations in the region.

The agency recently signed agreements to act as a consultant to the governments of the Republic of the Niger, the Republic of Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as participate in the funding of local development programmes. Niger is looking to finance the construction of a 1300 km oil pipeline. Guinea and the DRC are seeking to boost their transport infrastructure, including railways and roads.

It is also vital to assist Africa in building roads, airports, ports, and power plants. Russia has made a tremendous contribution to combating infectious diseases on the continent, as it did in countering the Ebola virus, and Russia could continue to do so. As of June 11 2020, owing to the coronavirus pandemic, 29 African states and the African Union had asked Russia for aid and aid has already been provided to Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, and South Africa.⁴⁹

In 2015, the Russian Export Centre was established with a view to promoting Russia's non-resource exports. In recent years, Russia's non-resource and non-energy exports have, indeed, increased:⁵⁰ in 2019, 84%⁵¹ of Russia's exports to North African states were non-resource and non-energy, and for Sub-Saharan Africa, the figure is about 67%.⁵²

In recent years, the EAEU has also moved forward in cooperating with Africa and the Middle East, particularly given the focus on diversifying trade flows from the EAEU member states. The EAEU-AU dialogue aims at intensifying the trade and economic cooperation between their member states and at advancing integra-

⁴⁹ 29 African States Asked Russia for Help in the Fight against the Pandemic // TASS. 11.06.2020.
URL: <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/8707391>

⁵⁰ Prospects for the export of Russian non-primary products to the countries of the Middle East and North Africa // Russian Export Centre. 16.12.2020.
URL: https://www.exportcenter.ru/press_center/news/perspektivy-eksporta-rossiyskoy-nesyrevoy-produktsii-v-strany-blizhnego-vostoka-i-severnoy-afriki/?sphrase_id=148788

⁵¹ North Africa // Russian Export Centre.
URL: https://www.exportcenter.ru/international_markets/world_map/north_africa/

⁵² Tropical Africa // Russian Export Centre.
URL: https://www.exportcenter.ru/international_markets/world_map/tropical_africa/

tion within the respective unions. In 2010–2018, the EAEU's trade turnover with African states grew nearly 2.7-fold to reach a total of USD 21.7 billion at year-end 2018; however, five African states (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, and Tunisia) account for nearly 80% of EAEU states' exports.⁵³ This ratio also needs to be changed.

The Russian Industrial Zone in the Suez Canal special economic zone in Egypt is a key project in developing Russia-Africa trade connections and industrial collaboration. The Russia-Egypt intergovernmental agreement establishing the Russian Industrial Zone was signed on May 23 2018. Its exploration and development had already been launched. Many Russian companies working in different areas and eager to tap into African and Middle Eastern markets are interested in having a place in this zone. This long-term (at least 50-year) project is intended to give a powerful boost to Russia's trade and economic relations not only with Egypt, but with all African states. The RIZ could also serve as a venue for increasing exports of Russian goods to Asia and Europe.⁵⁴

Russia-Africa military and military-technical cooperation is also strategically important. Russia endeavours to assist African states in achieving the security they need for their development. Russia has military-technical cooperation agreements with 40 African states and, with some of them, Russia also has defence cooperation agreements. Russian weapons and military equipment are in high demand in Africa owing to their high quality, adaptability for use in African conditions, and affordable prices. Russia both supplies weapons to Africa and provides aftersales service; a training program has been set up. As of October 2019, African states had ordered USD 14 billion worth of Russian weapons.⁵⁵

In the final declaration of the 2019 Russia-Africa Summit, the partners agreed to pool their efforts to promote trade, investment and sustainable development in order to make the global economic system more socially orientated, oppose any manifestation of unilateral approaches, protectionism and discrimination, and support a global trade regime based on the rules of the World Trade Organization. They also decided to join efforts to oppose political diktat and monetary blackmail in international trade and economic cooperation, suppress individual countries' desire to appropriate the exclusive right to determine the expedience and permissible parameters of legitimate interaction between states.⁵⁶ Russia and African states were also united in condemning unilateral sanctions without basis in international law. They view such sanctions either as a manifestation of double standards or as evidence of certain countries' desire to impose their will on other states.

⁵³ EAEU and African Union discuss draft Memorandum of Understanding // Website of the Eurasian Commission. 17.09.2019.
URL: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/nae/news/Pages/17-09-2019-2.aspx>

⁵⁴ The Russian Industrial Zone in Egypt // Russian Export Center. 08.2019.
URL: https://www.exportcenter.ru/upload/mkie/RIZ_web_082019.pdf

⁵⁵ Orders of African countries for Russian weapons reaches USD 14 billion // Interfax. 23.10.2019.
URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/681421>

⁵⁶ Final Declaration Adopted at the Russia-Africa Summit (in Rus: На саммите Россия - Африка приняли итоговую декларацию) // TACC. 24.10.2019.
URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/7041693>

Russia–Africa Relations in the Post–Crisis Era

Assuming Russia emerges from the crisis without catastrophic economic and political consequences, Moscow has opportunities to preserve and even bolster its standing in Africa. Moscow remains an important party to most multilateral talks on security and development in some regions of the global South (primarily North Africa). At the same time, Moscow will apparently be unable to invest major non-recoverable resources in Africa so will attempt to base its relations with the African world on the “for-profit” model. Africa will hardly be one of Russia’s strategic foreign political priorities comparable to the U.S., the European Union or East Asia. Obviously, in its African affairs, Moscow will continue to bank on bilateral relations with its traditional strategic partners, such as Egypt, South Africa and Ethiopia. As in other states, the systemic crisis in Russia will boost isolationist sentiments; public opinion is unlikely to enthuse about proposals to expand Russia’s aid to Africa.

If regional instability in Africa intensifies, Russia may gain certain additional tactical opportunities, particularly given the likely rise of anti-Western sentiments in African states. These opportunities will expand in the U.S. and the EU display less interest in Africa given their own mounting domestic problems and increasing shortage of resources that could be earmarked for aid programmes. Should Russia wish to do so, it could use the post-crisis «power vacuum» in many African regions in its own interests. Additionally, instability objectively makes military power and capabilities of projecting it more valuable, that is, instability increases the value of those foreign policy instruments where Russia can compete both with the U.S. and with China (as for China, it would be better to talk about supplementing China’s economic initiatives in the global South).

Accordingly, Russia will have opportunities to use the “Syrian” or “Libyan” model to advance its interests in unstable African regions. Given the clearly limited material resources exacerbated by the pandemic in Russia and by low hydrocarbon prices, Russia appears more likely to use the “Libyan” model, avoiding becoming directly involved in conflicts, attempting to maintain constructive relations with the principal parties to the conflicts, and pursuing not so much general geopolitical as specific economic goals.

On the other hand, Russia now has an opportunity to advance the establishment of extensive international coalitions intended to resolve regional problems. It would be incorrect to view Russia’s interests in Africa as being in principle incompatible with those of the West, especially since the very notion of the «West» in relation to the global South prompts many questions: the stances taken by Russia and the European Union are closer to each other than to that taken by the U.S. on a whole range of African problems.

The most difficult question for Moscow is demonstrating its comparative advantages as a partner in implementing Africa’s economic and social modernisation programmes. The USSR was so popular in the Third World because Moscow acted as a geopolitical counterbalance to Washington and supported the developing states in their confrontation with their former colonial powers. In addition to

that, the USSR offered its own version of the future for the global South, its own development model and its own recipes for resolving pressing socio-economic problems in developing states. And even though the Soviet model ultimately failed, its influence on African elites and societies has prolonged.

Russia is not the Soviet Union. It is currently not in a position to serve as a development model for African states or for anyone else in the world. Many acute problems typical of African states (dependence on exports of hydrocarbons and other resources, social inequality, low efficiency of state governance, corruption, weak motivation for innovations, etc.) characterise today's Russia to the same or nearly the same degree as African states. Yet, it is precisely the common problems and challenges that create additional opportunities for equal cooperation. Without claiming the role of teacher and mentor, Russia could suggest to African states jointly handling of the difficult tasks of socio-economically and politically modernising «semi-peripheral» societies in the global world of the 21st century.

Given both the military and political realities of today and the challenges and opportunities that are but vaguely looming on the horizon, it may be time to think about Russia's long-term African strategy. For instance, both Russia and African hydrocarbon exporters face the common challenge of the global energy revolution. In the future, joint preparations for this inevitable revolution could prove no less important than achieving an OPEC+ agreement on production quotas.

We have already noted the problem of asymmetry in Africa–China relations. Russia could prove relevant here as well by suggesting that its regional partners become involved in multilateral structures (for instance, the SCO or BRICS+) where Beijing's dominance would be counterbalanced by specific decision-making procedures with other political actors. In addition, Russia can also speed up the talks on establishing Africa–EAEU free trade zones.

Like EU member states, Russia would gain much from expanding the range of its African partners by adding civil society institutions, leading universities, and influential think tanks. This is particularly relevant in the context of the impending transformation of Africa's political elites, many of whom graduated from Soviet and Russian universities, many states have long-standing Russian Diasporas, and the interest in Russian culture persists.

Yet this is insufficient for building the foundation of solid relations with Africa. It is important that Africa associate Russia not only with the past but also the future, not only with maintaining stability and resolving security crises, but also ambitious socio-economic development objectives. To achieve that, however, Moscow should approach the future of Africa not only from the viewpoint of potential threats and challenges for Russia, but also from that of new opportunities and prospects.

Part III. China–Russia Bilateral Cooperation in Africa

The Foundation of Common Interests of China–Russia Cooperation in Africa

First, the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between China and Russia has laid a solid political foundation for China-Russia cooperation in Africa. At the political level, China and Russia are not strategic competitors. Both parties view Africa as an essential element to fulfil each other's national strategic goals and establish a fair, reasonable and multilateral international order.

Second, both China and Russia pay significant attention to maintaining stability on the continent. The peace and stability of Africa are preconditions of China-Africa and Russia-Africa political and economic relations. China and Russia respect Africa's independence and autonomy and stand against interfering in African countries' internal affairs. China and Russia make great efforts to facilitate and promote Africa's economic and social development.

Third, China and Russia need to cooperate in the fight against terrorism. Both China and Russia face the threat of terrorism, and international cooperation is a prerequisite in the fight against terrorism. In recent years, terrorism has been spreading in Africa. Therefore, China and Russia need common efforts to strengthen anti-terrorism cooperation on the continent.

China–Russia Competition in Africa

In the process of developing mutually beneficial and cooperative relations with Africa, it is inevitable for China and Russia to have some extent of competition in some fields.

First, economy and trade. The structural difference between China-Africa and Russia-Africa trade is relatively wide, and China and Russia only have competition in certain fields. The trade volume of China-Africa is much larger than that of Russia-Africa, and it is unrealistic for Russia to have an all-round economic and trade competition with China in Africa.

Second, the energy field. In this field, China and Russia have some extent of competition. However, regarding energy policy, China and Russia have different levels of development and goals. Thus, there is more room for China-Russia cooperation instead of competition in the energy field in Africa.

Third, military technology cooperation. During a long period, Russia's military technology has been more advanced than that of China. Thus, Russia is more competitive than China in the field of military sale. The fast growth of China's

military technology will increase competitions with Russia in some fields of the military markets in Africa. However, this competition will be restrained.

To sum up, for China and Russia, Africa has important strategic value. China and Russia have broad common interests in Africa, and the potential of cooperation is wider than that of competition. Efforts to maintain Africa's peace and stability and the promotion of comprehensive development of African economies and society is in line with the strategic interests of China and Russia. Meanwhile, China and Russia's friendly cooperation in Africa is also a significant impetus to facilitate the all-round strengthening of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership.

China–Russia Bilateral Cooperation in Africa

Compared to China, Russia returned to Africa relatively late. Russia, however, lacks resources to invest in Africa. The great power competition stimulates Russia's involvement in Africa. China and Russia have shared interests in the world and Africa. China and Russia can achieve effective cooperation with Africa rather than partaking in the scramble for the continent or engaging with it with a colonial chip on the shoulder. The growth of industrialization and urbanization in Africa demands more resources and increasing participation from outside of Africa, including China and Russia. There are seven key areas for China and Russia cooperation in Africa (from low politics to high politics): **Public health, Agriculture, Industrialization, Urbanization, International Trade, Politics and Security, Relations with the U.S and E.U.** Under this circumstance, China and Russia can cooperate and collaborate on short- and long-term programs.

Short Term Projects

Public Health and Combatting COVID-19

Epidemic disease, such as malaria, Ebola and HIV/AIDS, the Zika virus and so on, have been threatening public health in Africa. The establishment of an African public health system is an urgent task in this region. Medical treatment is only the endpoint after the outbreak of epidemic disease. Disease control and prevention, especially epidemic control, is the main goal of this system. Disease control in Africa must focus on preventive rather than curative medicine. Russia, after the Soviet revolution, established a cross-country epidemic control system which covered a vast geographical area with multiracial, different traditions and lifestyle population. This disease control and prevention system had successfully accomplished the eradication of some epidemic diseases. When the People's Republic of China was founded, it copied and followed the Soviet Union's model on disease control. P.R.C established a nationwide epidemic control system, named "Quarantine Station," which reached from big cities to far remote rural society. China also accomplished the eradication of some epidemic diseases. It was a positive preventive model, whereby public health workers vaccinate infants and adolescents home by home. The Russian epidemic control model fits Africa's situation. China and Russia have rich experience in this model. Under the COVID-19 pandemic threat, it is time that China and Russia cooperate to assist Africa to establish this "Quarantine Station" preventive model on disease control.

BRICS and the New Development Bank

China, Russia, and South Africa agreed that BRICS and the New Development Bank present strategic opportunities for greater cooperation and development. The BRICS enabled China, Russia and African countries work together. Russia, China and South Africa regard BRICS as a new mechanism characterized by poly-centric institutions. It would be a new platform for the more active involvement of more African countries. More importantly, within the framework of the BRICS, a new international monetary exchange system could be established, which might help avoid the risks of U.S. «long-arm jurisdiction.»

Taking its significant positions in existing and increasingly important alliances, such as BRICS, the SCO and EAEU, Russia could act as an architect of a fundamentally new ideological and practical approach to many international problems, including the African continent. For example, the Russian experience of multilateral diplomacy in the Middle East, where Moscow manages not only to maintain constructive relations with opposing parties in many conflict situations, but also to help bring together the positions of even the most irreconcilable opponents and achieve impressive practical results. These methods could also be important for Africa.

Russia chaired BRICS in 2020, which was a unique opportunity to highlight cooperation with Africa, mostly since South Africa was on board. Other African countries are waiting for access to new economic opportunities through the BRICS format, as South Africa was expected to become a so-called “gate” for other African states and play the role of a “lobbyist” for African “sister-countries.” This potential is still untapped.

Education, Social and Humanitarian Support

Africa needs to speed up socio-economic reforms, first and foremost in order to create new jobs for the 29 million African people who will reach working age every year between now and 2030. It is of vital importance that new jobs be made available for young Africans and women across the continent: about 42% of Africa’s employed youth live on less than USD 1.90 a day (in purchasing power parity), and only 12% of employable women in Africa are paid for their work. Although African people are the most entrepreneurial in the world, many entrepreneurs lack basic knowledge. For instance, most young entrepreneurs in Cote d’Ivoire and Madagascar do not have sufficient knowledge and opportunities to keep proper accounting records, deploy manufacturing means, use long-term planning instruments, identify relevant technological achievements and develop human capital.

Russia’s interaction with China in this area could offer the continent the requisite opportunities for a breakthrough. Developing interaction and cooperation between future generations and contributing to the global human capital is arguably the key point in expanding international interaction. All unresolved geopolitical issues will, in one way or another, be left behind (regardless of the degree to which they have been resolved). The young generation of the future will create new civil society models. This is why current actors on the continent, including Russia, need to bank on the future.

China and Russia can cooperate to establish more higher education institutions and vocational schools in Africa, which could help students from African countries. The young generation could hone new skills for modern development.

There are two areas that are especially important for the development of the continent – education and food. If African states manage to agree on the purchase of not only new technologies, but also on training for their implementation, new jobs will be created, and professional skills of the regional workforce will be improved.

The second and no less important area for cooperation with other states is food security. To feed 1.3 billion people, it is necessary to increase the volume of food production. The transition to intensive agriculture will require new methods, machines and equipment, fertilizers, chemical pest control and crop preservation. Given the changing relationship between Africa and the outside world, we can confidently assume the desire to create and produce in place the bulk of the main components for agricultural production and processing. This represents an opportunity for a profitable investment and partnership.

Counterterrorism and Peace-keeping Operations

For all players, the main obstacle to doing business on the continent is the risk associated with the instability and “fragility” of certain jurisdictions. After the successfully implemented strategy of Russia in Syria, it is increasingly called the «exporter of security.» At the same time, European countries have previously been active, expressing interest in the «peacekeeping» patronage and presence in Africa. It should also be noted that China has recently significantly increased its peacekeeping potential, ahead of all permanent members of the Security Council in terms of the number of contingents supplied. Information on the deployment of peacekeepers from the five permanent members of the Security Council is as follows: China – 2151, France – 741, Great Britain – 571, Russia – 71, U.S. – 35.

The accumulated best practices of Russian peacekeepers in African peacekeeping missions are an important part of the overall peacekeeping process, including political, military, diplomatic, police and geographical components. Conducting joint exercises, training African personnel, training in the art of negotiation and diplomacy to adhere to the principle of peaceful resolution of disputes, thus helping to ease tensions and establish peaceful cooperation between states – Russia can act as an initiator and platform for dialogue on ensuring security in Africa and bring out its expertise on the level of international cooperation on the continent.

It seems effective to engage various crisis management groups in the dialogue on the discussion of “African” security issues, as well as to build close cooperation with the relatively recently created Conflict Resolution Peace and Security Group for Conflict Resolution, Peace and Security under the African Union.

This also includes issues of cooperation in order to ensure the integrity, viability and universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the prohibition of biological weapons, as well as work aimed at preventing an arms race in space.

Long-Term Programs

International Organizations and Multilateral International Institutions

The increasing alignment among China, Russia and Africa in international organizations has the potential to impact the creation of a multipolar world since the three parties are subject to pressure from the West. China, Russia and Africa are commonly criticized in regard to their human right policies, as well as disengagement from the existing international institutions. China and Russia can consolidate the three parties' power in the United Nations and strengthen the role of the African Union in this region. Additionally, China and Russia can proactively participate in the Pan-African Forum to promote more regional cooperation in the political, economic, societal arena.

For a number of states that bear the trail of a colonial past in relations with Africa, cooperation with Russia and China can become a good “reputation” shoulder, and an additional (and sometimes the only) opportunity to diversify their business and political approaches in the eyes of African colleagues. The creation of multilateral partnerships and coalitions on specific issues under the auspices of Russia would, in many cases, increase the effectiveness of international strategies. Additionally, a discussion of African topics with leading foreign experts would help to articulate potential problems and competitive challenges in working with the continent, based primarily on the tasks of the African partners themselves.

One should not forget the opportunities opening up for strengthening global governance due to reform and representativeness of the UN Security Council by ensuring the wide participation of African states in the UNSC. The consolidated approach on joint positions of Russia and China here might play an important role for all parties, including African countries.

Silk Road Project Cooperation

The Silk Road routes stretched from China through India, Asia Minor, up throughout Mesopotamia, to Egypt, the African continent, Greece, Rome, and Britain. In 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed that China would create a “Silk Road Economic Belt” across Central Asia and Europe and a “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” running through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, on the Middle East and Europe – programs meant to revive ancient trade routes and reinforce existing ones. Beijing wove these two visions together and dubbed them the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). At the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) Summer Davos Meeting the “Belt & Road Africa Fund” was launched and officially announced, financed by China. South Africa has signed a MoU with China concerning the Belt & Road Initiative and is one of the equal partnership members of the BRICS grouping, along with Brazil, China, India and Russia. The fund will focus on investments in Africa, which will include co-investments in infrastructure, technology, E-Commerce, artificial intelligence (AI) and the beneficiation of the resource industry in Africa. Additionally, the fund will serve as a cooperation platform between business sectors in China and Africa. Taking into consideration the project “One Belt One Road” which charges the Greater Eurasia not only with ambitious plans, but also with large-scale practical activities, in turn, contribu-

ting to the increasing recognition of the Eurasian project on the world stage and the growth of authority of the Eurasian structures. Russia expresses full support of the project initiative, and that cooperation might open a new page for Russia-China-Africa interaction as well.

Industrialization and Urbanization

Industrialization and urbanization are top priorities in Africa, in which China has already invested for several decades. China's belt and road initiative (BRI), amongst various projects on the continent, have promoted the region's industrialization and urbanization. Another example is the Mombasa Nairobi Railway. Russia has significant experience and available technology to foster such industrialization, especially in the heavy industry, on which industrialization is based. Russia had invested in some mega projects, such as fertilizer factories in Africa. China and Russia can cooperate to assist African industrialization and urbanization through the technology transfer of agricultural skills and machinery, mining, auto components, chemicals, IT and IT-enabled services.

With the decline and technological flaws of Boeing, it is an opportunity for China and Russia to collaborate on the new aeroplane market in Africa. China's C-919 and C-929 and Russian helicopters could be in demand on the continent, as well as the Chinese Beidou and Russian Glonass that could provide navigation service to Africa.

Infrastructure, IT and Digitalization

Russia and China can work together to improve and develop African infrastructure. The challenges that fragile countries and communities in Africa face from infrastructure disruptions are huge. These disruptions impact service delivery and harm people who experience them, particularly when caused by natural disasters.

The technological revolution taking place on the continent opens up new opportunities for closer cooperation between Africa and countries wishing to invest in promising markets. Over the next ten years, Africa is expected to change more than in the last century. Firstly, this opens a new path of accelerated development for the continent, as African countries can introduce new technologies and apply more sustainable practices now. In fact, the continent jumped through several steps at once in comparison with European and Asian economies, since the rapid changes happened in the digital picture of the world. Secondly, the transformation of Africa creates new promising areas where foreign technology and know-how can be demanded, that is, areas attractive for foreign investment. African countries comprise at least half of the top 15 most-affected countries in each category of infrastructure disruption. To close this gap, the African Development Bank estimates that Africa's infrastructure needs are between USD 130 and USD 170 billion per year. Russia and China can play an essential role in developing and maintaining a resilient and sustainable infrastructure.

Nuclear Power Plant and Sub-Saharan Africa Continental Grid

Significant potential is presented by technological interaction in various sectors, such as energy, infrastructure, telecommunications and the digitalization of the

economy. Russia will continue to steer its course for promoting cooperation in energy security (including the diversification of energy resources), using renewable energy sources and implementing joint projects in civil nuclear technologies in Africa. Mutually profitable cooperation in the oil and gas sector will continue. The 2019 Summit featured talks on building nuclear research centres in several African states. Russia holds leading positions in the development and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, working with partners (suppliers) to produce individual components and equipment, as well as with other global actors in nuclear energy. Projects in this sector are rather costly, and finding financing for them is not easy.

Additionally, African states themselves are unable to provide co-financing. It is also difficult for countries with sizeable sovereign debt to obtain loans from international development institutions. It is important to note here that NPPs serve as a sort of security “guarantor.” Despite some turbulence, the African continent is still considered not as a hotbed of conflicts, but, above all, the platform for investment and development.

More and more African countries have committed to combating climate change by abandoning coal energy. Electricity shortage may present a serious challenge to African development. In order to deal with this problem, Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa, needs more clean energy power, such as solar energy. However, the best solution would be a uniform continental grid based on one or two nuclear power plants. Combining Chinese and Russian nuclear power plant technology and Chinese Ultra-volt electricity transmission technology could help create a “green Africa.”

Cooperation in Ecology, Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development

The final document of the Russia–Africa Summit in Sochi was the Final Declaration, where particular attention was given to cooperation in environmental protection. Article 45 of the Declaration states the intent to “Strengthen efforts to address climate change in Africa, transfer necessary technologies, build the capacities and enhance the abilities of African States to build resilience against and adapt to the negative impact of climate change.” Russia recently ratified the Paris Agreement and is now joining the active phase of counteracting climate change on the planet. Russia, for its part, having a powerful scientific and methodological base, is ready to identify the possibilities of its fundamental and scientific research, which may be important for the continent. Cooperation with other participating countries within the African Agenda may be particularly relevant and will offer additional positive dialogue formats.

Conclusion

Forward-Looking Opportunities and Decisions: Sustainable Development and Political Stability in Light of the Coronavirus Crisis

The old adage says that any crisis involves not only new dangers and challenges but also new opportunities. A “perfect storm” situation could and should serve as an incentive to seek new modernization models and strategies, to make decisions that are unpopular and risky yet necessary, to expand international cooperation, to form broad social and political coalitions that could not be created under other circumstances. African states could use the crisis to force a transition to new algorithms of economic and social development suited to the 21st-century realities.

Awareness of challenges and dangers common to Africa as a whole could help the continent overcome its current political differences, form a single agenda and advance the emergence of African states’ currently absent group solidarity. Apparently, new strategies should be based on ideas of sustainable socio-economic development and political stability and on moving away from the 20th century’s traditional alternatives (democracy vs. authoritarianism, market economy vs. controlled economy, liberalism vs. socialism, etc.).

Any of the above-listed economic and social problems have certain development potential. For instance, the nascent energy revolution opens up for African states an opportunity both to join efforts to create a new energy sector and to become leaders in some of its areas. Africa has obvious comparative advantages in geography, climate and resources for developing the new energy sector. There emerge new potential opportunities for expanding African states’ cooperation with China (solar power), the European Union (wind power), with Russia (hydropower and nuclear power). Africa’s decreasing role in traditional hydrocarbon energy will curtail stimuli to preserve the economy based on natural resource rents.

Digitization and automation do create problems for Africa, but they also open up opportunities for embedding the continent in the new emerging global manufacturing chains. The experience of many states in East and Southeast Asia demonstrates that creating a favourable digital economic environment creates many new jobs, a shorter working week; new economic sectors have a positive effect on traditional ones, there are new prospects for more actively involving women and young people in economic life.

Given a favourable chain of events, transition to the new technological paradigm will narrow the current gap between the urban and rural populations; new technologies will additionally encourage businesses to operate outside urban centres; quality of life in rural areas will improve. State monopolies and clan-based eco-

conomic systems will be dealt a severe blow, making the African economies more efficient overall. Development of the digital economy will, to some extent, offset the inevitable drop in geographic mobility and curtailed migration flows in the post-COVID-19 world.

Additionally, breakneck urbanization might prove to be an advantage to Africa rather than a drawback. Big cities and conurbations will have the greatest appeal for foreign investment owing to their available labour force, capacious local markets and relatively developed infrastructure. As a rule, an urban environment affords more economic and social opportunities for women and young people; there is greater social and professional “upward mobility” here than in smaller towns and rural areas. Metropolitan areas could serve as laboratories for seeking solutions to social and environmental problems, especially if city authorities have sufficient financial and administrative autonomy to implement their plans. Big cities could raise a new generation of politicians capable of broadening the horizons of the political space and challenging conservative and archaic old elites.

China will evidently remain as the principal external actor capable of advancing Africa’s transition to a sustainable development track in the foreseeable future. Chinese investment can play an important role in modernizing Africa’s infrastructure and giving the continent easier access to the growing East Asian markets. If Beijing manages to maintain its steady economic growth despite all the attendant growth problems, successful implementation of the Belt and Road Project will radically transform the socio-economic landscape not only in Eurasia but also in many African regions.

National elites will become increasingly interested in cooperating with China; large parts of African elites will be attracted by China’s plans to create international and financial institutions and regimes that would constitute an alternative to Western ones; the same applies to Beijing rejecting the universalism of Western values. African states’ involvement in the Belt and Road Project will naturally increase the asymmetry in the economic ties of China and its partners. The African world appears unlikely to develop some kind of consolidated stance regarding China, but it is still possible. Otherwise, African states will compete with one another in granting Beijing maximum possible preferences and benefits, which will further increase Africa’s general asymmetry in its cooperation with China.

Modern and strategically thinking leaders can use state institutions to produce effective socio-political mobilization, which is a mandatory prerequisite for successful national modernization projects. A strong and self-confident state could act as a legitimate arbiter and balancer between various and sometimes economically and socially opposed interests. Similarly, only a strong state can ensure a stable and effective balance between the centre and the periphery, guarantee manageable and consistent decentralization without risking the uncontrollable collapse of the state. A strong state is capable of becoming a responsible international actor and of participating in regional agreements and alliances. If sustainable regionalism is possible in Africa at all, it is only possible through participation by strong states.

Religious pluralism and progress toward individual choice in religious matters will push societies in the direction of greater tolerance and overcoming the consequences of old denominational conflicts. Although sub-national group identities will continue to play an important part in Africa, gradually increased emphasis on individual rights and freedoms will allow the priority of the nationwide identity over other group identities to be entrenched. Faced with the need to fight for the loyalties of their flocks, religious organizations will be forced to distance themselves from the state in their practical actions, to step away from politicizing religious arguments, and to gear themselves toward the immediate needs of local communities. These developments could result in a more active and productive inter-denominational dialogue.

Finally, the low likelihood of Africa evolving reliable collective security systems in the near future does not mean that no successes can be achieved in security at all. Today, the global South has an unprecedented general need for some regional mechanisms for settling crisis situations, mechanisms that could alleviate potential consequences of new incidents and miscalculations, defuse escalation risks, etc. The very lack of such mechanisms is a significant factor for instability, since it consistently generates mistrust and breeds suspicion concerning potential adversaries' intents. The immediate goal is not to resolve all of Africa's security problems but to ensure greater predictability and mutual confidence in the possibility of efficiently handling the inevitable micro-, mini-, and mega-crises.

Setting up communication channels and establishing crisis settlement groups that could exchange early warning data and information obtained from reliable technical monitoring tools should serve as a starting point in "taking control of escalation risks." Even such a limited goal will require potential adversaries to make politically brave decisions, yet achieving this goal appears quite feasible.

History has entered a new era. Geopolitics retains its core position in international relations. However, the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic shows that any tiny crisis will be magnified into a "Black Swan" in the globalization era, which will affect the stability of the international system. The decline of the democratic system coincides with identity politics, while domestic politics heavily influence international relations. The U.S. is worried about its industrial development, as it lost self-confidence on its advantages on science and technology. It fears any challenges from rising powers. Therefore, the U.S started to challenge globalization. The existing international institutions are now void of absolute commitments. The international system established after World War II also faces unprecedented challenges and crisis. Many countries are forced to choose a side in the political, industrial and technological systems under the U.S. truculent pressure. The world is in a crisis of de-globalization. The haze of the "New Cold War" will bring unprecedented uncertainty to the world. The world is at the crossroads of a global crisis.

Despite the competition between China and Russia in some areas, the external forces that undermine Sino-Russian cooperation have never ceased to exist. However, the aspiration and ability of Sino-Russian cooperation are solid, and

the high level of strategic mutual trust between China and Russia is the political basis for bilateral cooperation in the international stage. In this period of great transformation, Sino-Russian cooperation is the core force to maintain the stability of the world system. There is every reason to believe that Africa is capable of producing to be either the core of the fundamental problems of the 21st-century's global order, or an irreplaceable component of their resolution. It will once again aggravate the unbalanced development of Africa.

China has hosted "The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation" since 2000, while Russia hosted the «Russia Africa Summit» in 2019. China and Russia share common interests in Africa, with complementarity and cooperation being the basis for their cooperation on the continent. The cooperation between China and Russia is in line with the needs of African development, taking actual needs and value into account. Cooperation and development are the international responsibility of both sides. China and Russia have never colonized Africa. On the contrary, they have given great support to African countries to get rid of colonial rule, during national liberation movements and in achieving independent national development, which greatly promoted the establishment of international order after the Second World War. Peace, development and win-win cooperation are not only the foundation of long-term friendship and cooperation between China and Russia, but also the foundation of China- Russia-Africa trilateral friendship and cooperation. China-Russia bilateral cooperation in Africa hopes to bring about a prosperous, peaceful, and wealthy continent.

African development determines the trends of the international political system. The comprehensive cooperation among China, Russia and Africa is the most important stabilizer to prevent the collapse of the existing international system. The cooperation between China and Russia in Africa is not a simple process of one-way assistance to Africa, but also a process of opening China and Russia's markets to Africa, so that Africa's development can catch the high-speed rail of Sino-Russian cooperation, and share the peace and development based on Sino-Russian cooperation. The cooperation among China, Russia and Africa is not exclusive. It is a friendly platform and an open framework. All countries in the world are welcome to seize this historic opportunity. This is unprecedented cooperation in the history of mankind and a great pioneering work in building a shared future with Asia, Europe and Africa.

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The Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) is a non-profit international relations think tank on a mission to provide policy recommendations for all of the Russian organizations involved in international affairs.

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Notes

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