

## **Independent African States and Foreign Policy Direction: A diplomatic analysis**

by

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### **Abstract**

Perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of nationhood and nation building in which most Independent African States are failing, wobbling and fumbling is the Foreign Policy direction. It is very obvious that the Independent African States have not been able to understand let alone replicate the underlying principles and theories guiding foreign policy direction as inherited from their colonial masters. Even Ethiopia which had no colonial cleavages hasn't gotten it right. Although America also suffered from colonial adventure, she has indeed mastered the art and act of effective and efficient foreign policy guideline in strict compliance with national and citizens' interests. This concept has even been escalated to the level of "America First" by the Trump administration. This paper argues that it has become absolutely necessary for the Independent African States to begin to take a very critical look at the foreign policy direction in their struggle for nationhood, nation building and national development. The determinants of foreign policy across Africa should be articulated in such a way as to reflect their national interests in all circumstances. The main proposition in this paper is that domestic changes in Independent African States should necessarily lead to a reshuffling of foreign policy objectives with a renewed emphasis on national and citizens' interests along with improved relations with the African neighbours. Perhaps South Africa, Botswana, Rwanda and a few African states have been able to manipulate the post colonial foreign policy era in their national interests, many others have not in absolute terms been able to extricate their foreign policy mechanism from the colonial aprons. Diplomacy devoid of emotive considerations and primordial undertones is required to advance the national and citizens' interests of Independent African States.

**Keywords:** Colonial cleavages, Domestic determinants, External influences, Foreign policy Neighbourliness and Reshuffle

### **Introduction:**

Foreign Policy, also referred to as the international relations policy, is a set of goals outlining how a state will interact with other states economically, politically, socially and militarily. To a lesser extent, Foreign Policy also defines how a state will interact with non-state actors. Foreign policy is primarily concerned with the boundaries between the external environment outside of a nation-state and the internal or domestic environment, with its variety of sub-national sources of influence (Webber and Smith, 2000). Foreign policies are designed to help protect a state's sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interests, citizens' interests, national security, ideological goals, and economic prosperity. This can occur as a result of peaceful cooperation with other states in the international system, collaboration through regional organizations or through exploitation as obtainable in the colonial past as well as peripheral cases in the contemporary world.

Foreign policies may also be viewed as the authorized official guidelines, courses of action and strategies used by governments to guide their foreign relations or actions in the international arena. They spell out the objectives state leaders have decided to pursue in a given circumstance or relationship. They also define the strategies by which they intend to pursue those objectives. Foreign Policy is described “as a coordinated strategy with which institutionally designated decision makers in a country seek to manipulate the international environment in order to achieve certain national objectives” (Handrieder, 1967). Day-to-day decisions made by governments are guided by “*Raison d'état.*” especially in every sphere of their foreign relations.

Africa is the world's second largest and second most-populous [continent](#) (behind [Asia](#) in both categories). At about 30.3 million km (11.7 million square miles) including adjacent islands (Venter & Neuland, 2005, p.16). It covers 6% of [Earth's](#) total surface area and 20% of its land area. With 1.2 billion people as of 2016, it accounts for about 16% of the world's [human population](#) (Lewis, Charlton T.; Short, Charles (1879). "Afer". *A Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 2015). The continent is surrounded by the [Mediterranean Sea](#) to the north, the [Isthmus of Suez](#) and the [Red Sea](#) to the northeast, the [Indian Ocean](#) to the southeast as well as the [Atlantic Ocean](#) to the west. The continent includes [Madagascar](#) and various [archipelagos](#). It contains 54 [fully recognized sovereign states](#), nine [territories](#) and two [de facto](#) independent [states with limited or no recognition](#).

The African continent comprises a diverse collection of states, each with its own set of peculiar past, prospects and challenges. The governance of individual territories, regions, and states requires tremendous care and attention, particularly where peace and stability are concerned (Akokpari, 2016). Just as Leadership is central to the prosperity of the African continent, particularly economic development; so is diplomacy and foreign policy critical to the advancement of the Independent African States (IAS). Therefore, legitimacy is most critical to Africa than any other continent in the international system. Where and when the authorities are perceived as legitimate; peace and prosperity have a better chance of succeeding, but where authority and governance are acquired without legitimacy, it breeds injustice, inequity and instability thus hampering any form of policies whether domestic or foreign from achieving set objectives. The political culture and climate of the African continent is directly proportional to her economic status just as it is an important barometer of where Africa will be as an emerging force in the global economic politics

At the moment, Africa which comprise of 54 independent states constitute approximately 25% of the nation-states that make up the United Nations. The United Nations, though a supranational organization has encouraged the formation of regional organizations for effective collaboration and cooperation on several issues especially security, economic advancement and policy harmonization. The interaction of regional and national governance is sacrosanct. Regional Organizations have been swift in responses to emergencies in their regions better and faster than the United Nations intervention on such emergencies and critical matters. Unfortunately, Independent African States have not been able to leverage on the regional template to positively impact on their foreign policy formulation and robust interaction within the continent for nation building and national development initiatives.

Over the years, almost all independent African states with the exception of Ethiopia have undergone periods of violent changes, from pre-colonial, apartheid, military to post-colonial, post-apartheid and post military regimes and modern-day leadership. One of the greatest casualties of these changes is Foreign Policy direction. It was an area given the least attention in terms of qualitative, strategic process of nation building and national development even

though these are very critical and crucial variables for the overall structural development of any state in the contemporary world.

Given that European cartographers drew the boundaries of many African states, the ties between Independent African people and their leaders are often fraught with difficulties. Over the years, African governments have had to grapple with challenges around boundaries, borders, which have been disrupted by the colonial adventurers along with cultural, political, and social nuances and dislocation. These have remained domestic challenges impacting heavily on the foreign policy directions and foreign policies of the Independent African States (IAS).

There is no doubt that, the social structure (a product of social dislocation) of the Independent African States (IAS) goes a long way in influencing the Foreign Policy direction of the African States. Cohesion of the African states has been impeded by these crises provoking colonial activities and wedges. Africa needs to rise above those elemental challenges and bring national interests of the IAS to the fore.

The concept of International cooperation among African states grew during the struggle for African Nationalism just as almost all African states united against the apartheid regime in South Africa. However, with the attainment of independence and abrogation of the apartheid enigma, the African states seem to have jettisoned the corporate regional cooperation and collaboration in favour of strengthening the erstwhile colonial chords. Thus, Independent African States have drawn inspiration from colonial ties as against strict national interests and brotherly considerations in their foreign policy direction.

#### **Independent African States and Foreign Policy Determinants:**

In a bid to attain set goals and interests in foreign policy, nation-states continue to seek effective strategies in their approach to foreign policy depending on their power, objectives and leadership. The primary objective to promote economic development mainly influences any state's approach to foreign policy while maintaining its traditional core principles and norms of non-alignment, non-interference in internal affairs of other states, good neighbourliness and peaceful settlement of disputes (Webber and Smith, 2000). These have underlined the principles behind most foreign policies of Independent African States.

On a general note, there are three fundamental determinants of foreign policies in any given modern or contemporary state, irrespective of the size, wealth and type of government. These include power, objectives and leadership (Kegley, 2008). These have both domestic and international influence (Kegley, 2008).

**Power:** In the context of domestic politics- power is usually based on numbers, wealth, and organizational skills. However, a small group that is well organized may exercise considerable influence even without large sums of money. In international politics, power depends on both geopolitical and idiosyncratic factors. Different nation-states in the globe differ in their powers. The US is the world's hyper power; thus have greatest influence in its foreign policies. There are also micro-states and various territories that are not self-governing or not independent such as colonies (The UK still has sixteen of such). Power of state depend on the following: Location (coastal or landlocked); size (large or small territory); population; Natural Resources (oil, iron ore, forests etc); Technology; Type of Government (dictatorship or democracy); type of Economy (market or centrally planned); Size and Equipment of Military (nuclear or conventional) and belief systems of such a state (UCC, 2007).

**Leadership:** It does matter who is elected to be the President of a particular African State. Leaders and the elites who support such leaders directly or indirectly shape the foreign policy direction of their respective countries (UCC, 2007). As a matter of fact most leaders especially

in Africa clearly determine the direction of their state's foreign policy. It is lamentable that the Bureaucratic Politics theory which postulates that there is no dominant figure in foreign policy making is not applicable to most Independent African States. Even President Donald J. Trump of the US is clearly a dominant phenomenon in American foreign Policy direction of recent.

Over time, the conflict-ridden areas throughout Africa have eased. Multiple peace initiatives have supplanted growing conflicts, and fomented a new cultural consciousness that espouses growth and development over war and conflict. While conflict still exists across many parts of Africa, the overall climate has cooled significantly from the days of persistent rebellion and genocide. However, War-torn zones still exist and development in these areas is riddled with humongous post-war challenges, extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition as well as hopelessness.

Government institutions represent a first set of domestic actors and factor that impact on foreign policy decision-making, foreign policy direction and foreign policy architecture. Even though foreign policy process can be quite different for democracies, decision-making authority tends to be diffused across democratic institutions, and thus more actors are involved. While leaders in authoritarian systems may prefer to make decisions by themselves, they too can face domestic constraints (Weeks, 2012) and may have to deal with divided institutional authority (Hagan, 1993; 1994). Democratic leaders, however, are directly accountable to political parties and the public and thus must often build a consensus for foreign policy.

Unfortunately, most Independent African States (IAS) had laid an authoritarian foundation to the extent that even when such states attain independence, the foreign policy mechanism seemed not to have a turnaround, As a matter of fact most African leaders know next to nothing in the operations of the international system. Most worrisome, they do not give so much attention to diplomacy and foreign policy direction as veritable tools for nation building and national development.

Bureaucratic structures and processes also impact on foreign policy direction of a state. State bureaucracies are charged with gathering information, developing proposals, offering advice, implementing policy, and in the course of such activities and responsibilities at times, indirectly impacting on foreign policy decisions and direction. Because of the complexities involved in dealing with the many issues of international politics, governments organize themselves bureaucratically, assigning responsibility for different areas or jurisdictions of policy to separate agencies or departments.

Scholars have shown that the following have serious implications for foreign policy (Kaarbo, 1998a). such as the commonality of bureaucratic conflict in the process of making foreign policy. The conflict may create inconsistent foreign policy if departments are acting on their own, rather than in coordination. It may also result in compromises that are not necessarily in the best interests of the state (Ball, 1974). While many studies have focused on applications in a few select countries, scholars have begun to explore applicability of bureaucratic politics to other cases of foreign policy decision-making in countries such as China, Argentina and Chile and Sweden and Finland (Qingmin, 2016).

Societal groups represent a third important set of actors that can impact foreign policy decision-making. Studies show that leaders may be more likely to pay attention to and react to the opinions of specific, organized societal groups than to the society at large, as they play the role of linking society to the state or of opposing and competing with the state. Interest groups articulate a particular societal sector's position and mobilize that sector to pressure and persuade the government (Beyers, Eising & Maloney, 2008). These groups are varied and may be based on issues such as ethnic identification, religious affiliation, or economics. Economic

groups often have an interest in foreign relations as they seek to promote their foreign business adventures abroad or to protect markets from competitors at home (Ku & Diehl, 1998). For example, China's foreign policy engagement in Africa has been heavily influenced by economic and business interests, and similar dynamics are at work in Australian commitments to India (Wesley & De Silva-Ranasinghe, 2011).

Political parties, although often part of the government, also play the role of linking societal opinion to political leadership (Hagan, 1993). In many ways, political parties function much like interest groups. In some countries, such as Iran, only one party exists or dominates the political system, and the party's ideology can be important in setting the boundaries for debate over foreign policy decisions and in providing rhetoric for leaders' speeches. In such cases, parties become less important than factions, which often develop within political parties. Factions are also important in political systems in which one party holds a majority in parliament and rules alone.

Public opinion and attitudes represent a fourth dimension of domestic factors that can impact foreign policy development. Similarly, enduring cultural features such as social values, norms and traditions equally set parameters for foreign policy. In democratic systems public opinion may, for example, be for or against their state intervening militarily in another country or signing a particular trade agreement. The public may agree on an issue or may be deeply divided. Scholars continue to debate the impact of public opinion on foreign policy, even in highly democratized states in which policy supposedly reflects "the will of the people." Some argue that leaders drive public opinion through framing messages in line with their preferences or that they ignore the public altogether (Entman, 2004). The information that the media provides the public may also be biased in favour of the government's policies.

Governance and foreign policy direction of IAS are also impacted by external forces: For instance, Global political movements, structural and economic adjustments particularly the rise of India, China, Russia, and Arab states has impacted African states in many ways. These external actors necessitate economic environments which are conducive to peace and stability. Africa is now the "Latest Bride" of the world. The USA, UK and indeed former colonial ties are gradually but persistently being displaced and replaced by these new diplomatic and economic entrants to Africa. The recently concluded UK-Africa Summit which is an obvious search of UK-Africa robust relations which is preceded by similar summits by Japan, China and Europe is a pointer to the international focus on Africa. Therefore, Africa should bear that in mind as the various leaders and foreign policy experts determine the foreign policy direction in the next decade which is very crucial to the future of Africa, nation building and national development.

### **Independent African States and Foreign Policy Direction:**

The Foreign Policy direction of Independent African states have suffered tremendous set back owing largely to factors such as colonial and post-colonial trajectory, lack of sufficient tutelage of the practitioners and handlers of post-colonial diplomatic initiatives and foreign policy formulation mechanism. The foreign policy making arena lacks proper understanding of the import and implications of National and Citizens interests.

All through the struggle for independence, the foreign policy architecture was driven to the back burner. Unfortunately, after the attainment of independence; IAS did not take the pains to commit the foreign policy direction and formulation to the hands of competent diplomats and professionals. Most foreign policy formulators and practitioners at the dawn of independence were first comers, ill informed, lacking in proper understanding of the concept of citizens and national interests just as most of the leaders placed little attention on diplomacy as a driver of national development.

International relations in Independent Africa States have changed not necessarily drastically, but gradually and persistently, especially in content since the abatement of the Cold War (Agyeman-Duah and Daddieh, 1994). Some of these changes have been accelerated by the pressures unleashed by security and economic challenges and by the international environment, including the reality of Africa's marginalization and the forces of globalization. These factors, as well as domestic factors, including debt burden, internal conflicts, border clashes, boundary conflicts, the impact of the ever-present Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), poverty, malnutrition/hunger and HIV/AIDS coupled with upsurge of terrorism and human insecurity in general which have combined to underscore foreign aid and economic assistance as key driving forces of the continent's foreign policies, foreign policy direction and diplomacy towards the North (Akopari, 2001a). They, foregoing, and among other factors have undermined Africa's increasingly tenuous economic sovereignty (Akopari, 2001a). Above all, it has led to the strengthening of ties with the North and international creditors in particular at the cost of intra and inter-African relations. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU) inaugurated as a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) a decade ago, promised to open a new chapter in Africa's international relations. It is argued, however, that against a background of a confluence of factors, these new continental projects will make only minimal impact in terms of mitigating the consequences of the aid-driven foreign policies and thus altering the donor-oriented postures of African states. Consequently, Africa's international relations in general and foreign policies in particular have taken a new dimension since the abatement of the cold war. Invariably the foreign policies direction of the IAS has been driven by factors other than national or regional or by far continental interests.

### **Multilateral Cooperation**

In the contemporary international system, both China and Russia seek to build active and fruitful cooperation with African countries in a multilateral format. What this means, first and foremost, is strengthening interaction with the African Union and other regional integration associations on the continent. The implication of these emerging foreign relations thrust is a mere substitution of the colonial links with Russia-Africa and Sino-Africa relations without necessarily strengthening the inter-African relations and emphasizing national and citizens' interests so crucial and critical to national development and nation building.

Modern Sino-African political and economic relations commenced in the era of [Mao Zedong](#), following the victory of the [Chinese Communist Party](#) in the [Chinese Civil War](#). Starting in the 21st century, the modern state of the [People's Republic of China](#) has built increasingly strong economic ties with [Africa](#). There are an estimated one million Chinese citizens residing in Africa (Africa and China, 2013). Additionally, it has been estimated that 200,000 Africans are working in China. As of 2020, [Eswatini](#) is the only African country to have relations with [Taiwan](#) (Mathews, Gordon and Yang Yang (2012).

Trade between China (PRC) and Africa increased by 700% during the 1990s and China is currently Africa's largest trading partner. The [Forum on China–Africa Cooperation](#) (FOCAC) was established in October 2000 as an official forum to greatly strengthen the relationship. A few [Western states](#), such as the [UK](#) and the [United States](#), have become concerned over the significant political, economic and military roles China is playing in the African continent (Peter Wonacott, 2011).

The [Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) emphasizes China's developmental engagements with Africa while also stating that China and Africa are making "joint efforts to maintain the lawful rights of [developing countries](#) and push forward the creation of a new, fair and just political and economic order in the world" ("China-Africa Relations", Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

the People's Republic of China, 25 April 2002). This Paper will not chronicle Chinese full relations and prospects with Africa as a continent and several independent African states but it underscores the current, emerging and possible future roles in Africa as a major driver of African Foreign relations and foreign policy directions.

Apart from the gradual but persistent influence of China in and on Africa, a major external force is Russia. In June 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov announced during his visit to Rwanda that Russia and the African Union were working on a political [framework document](#) that would lay the conceptual foundations for cooperation in the coming years. One of the tasks is to deepen trade and economic cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and African Union countries. Consequently, the President of the Russian Federation invited the Eurasian Economic Commission to take part in the Russia–Africa Summit held in Sochi last October and has [voiced his support](#) for the planned signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Commission and the African Union.

Russia has also considered it important to strengthen cooperation with African countries at the United Nations, as African countries make up a significant and influential part of that organization. This could help garner support for Russia's stance on various issues on the international agenda.

Russia is also strengthening its political interaction with African countries in the BRICS format. Even though South Africa is currently the only African country in this association, representatives from several African nations regularly attend the group's summits as guests and observers. The possibility of including other African states in the association is being discussed at the moment and this would have lasting impact on the foreign policy direction of IAS. Russia and the African Union constituent states signed a political declaration on Russia–Africa cooperation after the Summit.

**Trade, Economics and Investments:** Russia's trade with Independent African States (IAS) has demonstrated positive dynamics in recent years. According to the Federal Customs Service of Russia, trade between Russia and Africa totalled [\\$17.4 billion](#) in 2017 and [\\$20.4 billion](#) in 2018 (Federal Customs Service of Russia Reports for 2017/18... 2019 Reports being awaited).

While Russia's trade and economic relations are more highly developed with the countries of North Africa, trade with countries south of the Sahara has also been growing in recent years. Russia's main trade partners in Africa include Egypt, Algeria, Morocco and South Africa. Trade with Algeria is growing at a particularly rapid pace. However, in recent years, Russia has demonstrated positive trade dynamics with at least half of the countries in Africa, in particular with Ethiopia, Cameroon, Angola, Sudan and Zimbabwe. Namibia, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda and Guinea are also important partners. The Russian Federation supplies a wide range of goods to African countries, including oil products, chemicals, fertilizers, engineering products and machine tools.

Agricultural products occupy an important place in mutual trade. Russia supplies large volumes of wheat to Morocco, South Africa, Libya, Kenya, Sudan, Nigeria and Egypt. A number of African countries (Egypt, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali) have increased the volume of fruit and vegetables they sell to Russia. This is helped by the fact that the Russian Federation has introduced countersanctions on several products made in the European Union.

Africa is becoming a kind of "market of the future" for Russian grain and agricultural equipment. This is a very promising area, given the desire of African countries to eradicate the hunger issue ("zero hunger") and make more productive use of many of the large areas of

undeveloped land that still exist on the continent. This is a major factor in IAS foreign policy direction. African states are required to eradicate hunger, poverty and malnutrition from internal mechanisms, policies and programmes deliberately fashioned without any form of dependence on foreign powers.

### **Strengthening African National Interests**

The most significant concept behind that of power and sovereignty is National Interest: [National interest](#) is a state's action in relation to other states where it seeks to gain advantage or benefits to itself. National interest, whether aspirational or operational, is divided by core/vital and peripheral/non-vital interests. Core or vital interests constitute the things which a sovereign state is willing to defend or expand with conflict such as territory, ideology (religious, political, economic), or its citizens. Peripheral or non-vital are interests which a state is willing to compromise. This is a major challenge in Independent African States.

The transmutation of the OAU (Organization of African Unity) to AU (African Union) in 2002 should have been exploited and harnessed to create opportunities for an ambitious agenda in the foreign and continental policies of Independent African States (IAS). The Constitutive Act of the AU sets the normative basis for integrating various global instruments and protocols, including the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (See AU, 2015, op. cit., p. 5. also See UN Human Rights Council, '28th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council', 2–27 March 2015, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Pages/ResDecStat.aspx>, accessed 14 February 2016.) The Independent African States' Governance Architecture and the African Peace and Security Architecture were intended to provide a substantive institutional basis to advance IAS national interests, human rights, protect citizens' interests through good governance and democracy.

While progress has been made to advance human rights; the protection of national and citizen's interests have not been adequately catered for or ordered in the policies of most Independent African States (IAS). It is indeed time for the Independent African States to restructure the Foreign Policy Mechanism to place priority on national and citizens' interests rather than extraneous factors and forces like colonial and foreign aid apron-ties.

It is instructive, that the inability by African states to integrate diplomacies of national interests, human rights, democracy and good governance as pivotal identities in their foreign policies and foreign policy direction has become a major concern to diplomats, professionals and experts.

### **Military and Technical Cooperation**

A very critical aspect of foreign policy direction is the need for international cooperation on security issues, especially with the volume of insecurity on the African continent and the menace of terrorism clearly a major threat to the survival of many states including Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, among others. While China may not be deeply involved in providing military and technical assistance to Africa as it has chosen her path with Africa, Russia will obviously be a direction to turn then thus a major consideration in African foreign policy direction. In recent years, Russia has signed agreements on military and technical cooperation, security cooperation and fighting terrorism with a number of African countries.

At the Russia–Africa Economic Forum in June 2019, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, [noted](#) that

“Russia, both through bilateral channels and as part of the UN Security Council, continues to support its African friends in the fight against terrorism, crime and other cross-border threats. We are making a contribution to the efforts to resolve crises and



conflicts on the African continent on the basis of the principle of ‘African solutions to African problems’ formulated by the African Union” (A Declaration by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov during the Russia–Africa Economic Forum in June 2019).

Russia also provides humanitarian assistance to those African countries that have been affected by crises or military conflicts, or which have suffered natural disasters or pandemics. African personnel undergo training at Russian educational institutions under the umbrella of the Ministry of Defence, the law enforcement agencies and the security services, and as part of peacekeeping missions. The training programs are fully paid by the Russian budget.

Russia has traditionally played an important role in the African arms market. Russian arms shipments to Africa have increased in recent years, despite fierce competition from other external players and western sanctions. This is largely due to the successes of the Russian Aerospace Forces’ operations in Syria, as well as the numerous joint military exercises and Moscow’s large expositions at international military forums, where it typically unveils its new products.

The 2019 edition of the annual International Military and Technical Forum “ARMY” was held in June of this year. One of the main tasks of the Forum is to expand Russia’s military and technical cooperation with other countries. The number of delegations from Africa attending the Forum every year keeps rising. This is where new contracts for the supply of Russian weapons and agreements on the military, technical and security cooperation are often signed. Russia signed military cooperation agreements with Burundi, Burkina Faso, and Botswana at the ARMY 2018 Forum. This is a clear indication that Russia has become a critical factor in the foreign policy direction of the Independent African States.

For Africa, it is important to develop cooperation with foreign partners who are willing to share new technologies, as well as to deliver these technologies and implement them on the African continent, thus promoting industrial and human development. Russia and China, of course, have the know-how. But the question is; are these states sincerely willing to share this knowledge with their African partners, especially peaceful atom technologies, medical technologies among many others.

Three key points should be kept in mind by the IAS leaders, almost all Independent African states should endeavour and strive to pursue a multi-vector foreign policy, one that allows them to be flexible in their interactions with those external players which provide the most attractive conditions for cooperation. National Interests of the IAS should be the driving force and major factor of consideration: Even though Russia has exactly the same right as other international actors to develop relations with African partners, far from everyone outside of Russia agrees. But, whether or not they agree, African countries have the sovereign right to offer cooperation to, and develop cooperation with, Russia, regardless of what their other foreign economic partners think about it.

Perhaps yielding to growing criticism over its lending practices in Africa, China is writing off or restructuring debt for an increasing number of Independent African States in financial distress. China’s embassy in Kenya submitted in her Quarterly Reports that Beijing was ready to help heavily indebted African countries ease their debt burdens.

### **Conclusion**

Modern Africa truly is a continent of new opportunities. In economic terms, several African states are developing quite successfully, with the economies of a number of countries in the Sub-Saharan region demonstrating average GDP growth of 5.2 percent over the period 2000–2013. Some African countries have even been called “African lions,” similar to the highly

developed “Asian tiger” economies. There is a rapidly growing middle class on the African continent, which means rising consumption and increased demand, including for Russian goods and services. Russia is also interested in those minerals that play a crucial role in the development of industry and innovative technologies which it lacks. It would be economically viable to mine these resources in Africa.

While Russian diplomacy in Africa focuses on the entire continent, there are countries with which it is developing cooperation particularly vigorously. It is important to note here that Russia mostly interacts with its African partners on a bilateral basis, although it does maintain contacts with regional integration associations and the African Union, which spans the entire continent.

Conflict and governance are interlinked across Africa. Corruption is a widespread problem, particularly in the Central African Republic, Somalia, and South Sudan. Post-Cold War, major changes began to shape the political and social landscape across Africa. The liberalization of the USSR led to the development of civil society across Africa. Consider the Freedom House report from 1988 (17/50 countries were free or partly free) compared to the report from 2015 (31/54 countries were free or partly free). To attain its set goals and interests in foreign policy, any state continues to seek effective strategies in its approach to foreign policy depending on its power, objectives and leadership. The objective to promote economic development mainly influences any state’s approach to foreign policy while maintaining its traditional core principles and norms of non-alignment, non-interference in internal affairs of other states, good neighbourliness and peaceful settlement of disputes.

It should be noted that the needs of Africa in terms of human development, building new infrastructure, industrial development, fight against terrorism, healthcare, poverty alleviation and job creation are so great that the combined efforts of all external partners are both encouraged and welcomed. There is plenty of work for all interested parties. There is no need for a “battle,” rather, a strategic vision and a readiness to negotiate are required. This is the time for the leaders, diplomatic strategists, foreign policy architects and Independent African States’ Mission outpost administrators across the continent to settle down and channel IAS foreign policies towards the advancement of the individual states and the continent at large.

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