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DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN AFRICA: FINDING A SOLUTION IN GOVERNMENT-NGO PARTNERSHIPS

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I. Introduction

The African continent has long been an area of focus for governments, organizations, and individuals investing in development. Despite proclaimed departures from the colonial era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Africa is still widely regarded as a continent in need of saving. Development efforts have addressed a wide array of challenges faced by populations across Africa's fifty-four nations, including but not limited to free trade, access to sustainable energy, infrastructure, education, and women's entrepreneurship. Each global superpower engaged in development projects on the continent has myriad motivations for their areas of focus, yet all recognize the growing influence that African leaders and their people will have over the next few decades. With a rapidly increasing population and vast regions flush with valuable resources, Africa is poised to be an economic powerhouse on par with some of the most important economies today. Consequently, securing control and loyalty over multiple African countries is a strategic move for global superpowers today to retain their position at the top of the global power dynamic.

This quickly expanding interest in engaging with African countries, however, shapes the focus and model of ongoing and new development projects on the continent. Both aspects of these agreements have implications for the intended and realized impact, with many inevitably failing to adequately meet the needs of communities and occasionally exacerbating the instability felt regionally and nationally. I aim to analyze and account for the development trends today in order to understand how sustainable development can be more effectively achieved through partnerships between African governments and national and international non-governmental organizations.

II. History of Development in Africa: Entanglements with Colonialism

The earliest forms of foreign development aid directed at African countries came through a colonial framework. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, multiple European countries engaged in what is now known as the 'Scramble for Africa,' a twenty-five year period of competition for control over various African regions and resources. The 1885 Berlin Conference was the defining event for this era of European colonization of Africa, regulating the partitioning of African territories among European leaders ("The Berlin Conference"). The Conference formalized the fight for control and "confirmed the fact that Europeans did not consider those people found in Africa to be human beings that deserved to be treated with dignity" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 28). Rather, Europeans saw the continent as a land of expansive resources, including human labor, ripe for the taking.

Although many other European countries participated in the 'civilizing mission,' Britain and France were the two most significant players on the continent. Each country took a different approach to securing control of the local governments, people, and resources. The British monarchy implemented an 'indirect rule strategy' in which they employed indigenous African institutions to administer British colonial policy, while the French utilized a 'direct rule strategy' to keep all of the colonial decision-making centralized in Paris (Njoh 161). Each approach has its own complex array of lasting implications for the progression of each former British and French colony, yet both were deeply rooted in exploitation of indigenous African populations and their land. Moreover, the colonial period represents a relatively short period within the larger European exploitation of African people under the 300-year long slave trade. During this period, Europeans regarded themselves as the 'saviors' of the African people, bringing education and civilization through the sharing of culture, language, and religion (Chafer 191). Some referred to the colonies as a “philanthropic enterprise,” despite the reality that “the social services [were] miserably inadequate as compared to the need” (Du Bois 723). With this promoted perspective, the British and French justified their exploration and exploitation of Africa as one of civilization and development.

Despite this framing, British and French colonialism across Africa did not inspire development, but rather hindered it so significantly that the impacts are still felt today. Studies suggest that the indirect rule strategy, specifically, “could be a cause of underdevelopment and political instability in postcolonial Africa” as a result of the division of indigenous people between ruling and ruled groups causing distrust (Mizuno & Okazawa 417). The same study posits that this model of exploitation pitting indigenous populations against one another “provides one possible explanation of the conflicts in Rwanda, Burundi, and Zanzibar” (Mizuno & Okazawa 417). This is but one example of the social discord that colonial ruling structures sowed in territories across Africa, as well as the ways in which those patterns of social discord led to conflicts that have largely prevented many states from achieving stability — both politically and socially.

The implications for the current state of development extends beyond that of the social and political realm. Much of the emphasis in development on the African continent, whether positioned for trade or infrastructure, is on economic development. To this day, foreign investors that aim to address the economic stagnation in many African countries attribute it to the other patterns of instability without recognizing the impact that colonial histories had on not only creating those patterns of instability, but also generating the economic dependency that Africa experiences today. Prior to the formalization of colonies, trans-African trade was incredibly robust, and it was the “policies of colonialism [that] forced the demise of African industry and created a reliance on imported goods from Europe" (Settles 11). Intracontinental trade is now recognized to be an area of improvement to boost economic performance and independence, earning direct acknowledgement among the Agenda 2063 goals ("Continental Frameworks"). Thus, the period of colonialism on the African continent cannot be recognized as a period of development or 'civilization' as Europeans suggested at the time, but rather a period of exploitation that at best, stunted, and at worse, reverted, all forms of development across the continent.

III. <u>Partnerships with Former European Powers</u>

Following the colonial era, many European countries have engaged in newer development partnerships with African governments, primarily under the larger European Union (EU). Looking to the future of development initiatives as led by former colonial powers specifically, it is necessary to recognize this period of immense exploitation and consider, as some believe, that "Europe's image of Africa, although changing fast, is too firmly tethered to history to be easily or quickly recalibrated" (Olusoga). Taking the history of exploitation and racism into consideration, we must be critical of the true impact of African development projects and investments set forth by the EU. There is space for EU countries to make amends for their colonial past through ongoing partnership efforts, which is precisely why a careful consideration of the success of these efforts will help to assess how far the EU has come in shaping African political, social, and economic progress.

Recently, the European Union has made strides toward broadly defining and outlining a partnership with Africa for the coming years. More specifically, the EU has sought out a strategy for engaging with the African Union (AU), a pan-African organization representing the needs and desires of the continent as a whole. In anticipation of the 6th EU-AU Summit of October 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union published a document to set forth a framework for discussion. Within this joint communication, the European Commission and High Representative identified five key partnerships: green transition and energy access, digital transformation, sustainable growth and jobs, peace and governance, and migration and mobility ("Towards a Comprehensive…" 2). Furthermore, the document recognized young people and women as the key subsects of the African population to focus on in an effort to drive sustainable development ("Towards a Comprehensive…" 1). Similar to other global superpowers, the EU recognizes the immense influence that Africa's growing population and economy will have in the future international landscape.

In addition to the five identified partnerships, the European Commission and High Representative highlighted the importance of trade partnerships with the African continent. Agenda 2063, a culminating statement on the goals of the African Union to achieve by 2063, includes the flagship project, the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) aims to make Africa a leading global powerhouse through the strengthening of its economy by eliminating trade barriers internally ("About The AfCFTA"). Trade agreements between the EU and AU are already relatively robust (see Figure 1), although the EU sees growth potential. The EU hopes to build off the AfCFTA by promoting "cooperation on the strategic corridors that facilitate intra-African and Africa-Europe trade and investment" to create "a comprehensive continent-to-continent free-trade area" ("Towards a Comprehensive…" 8). This would further cement the relationship between the EU and AU, centering the EU as a key partner in economic development.

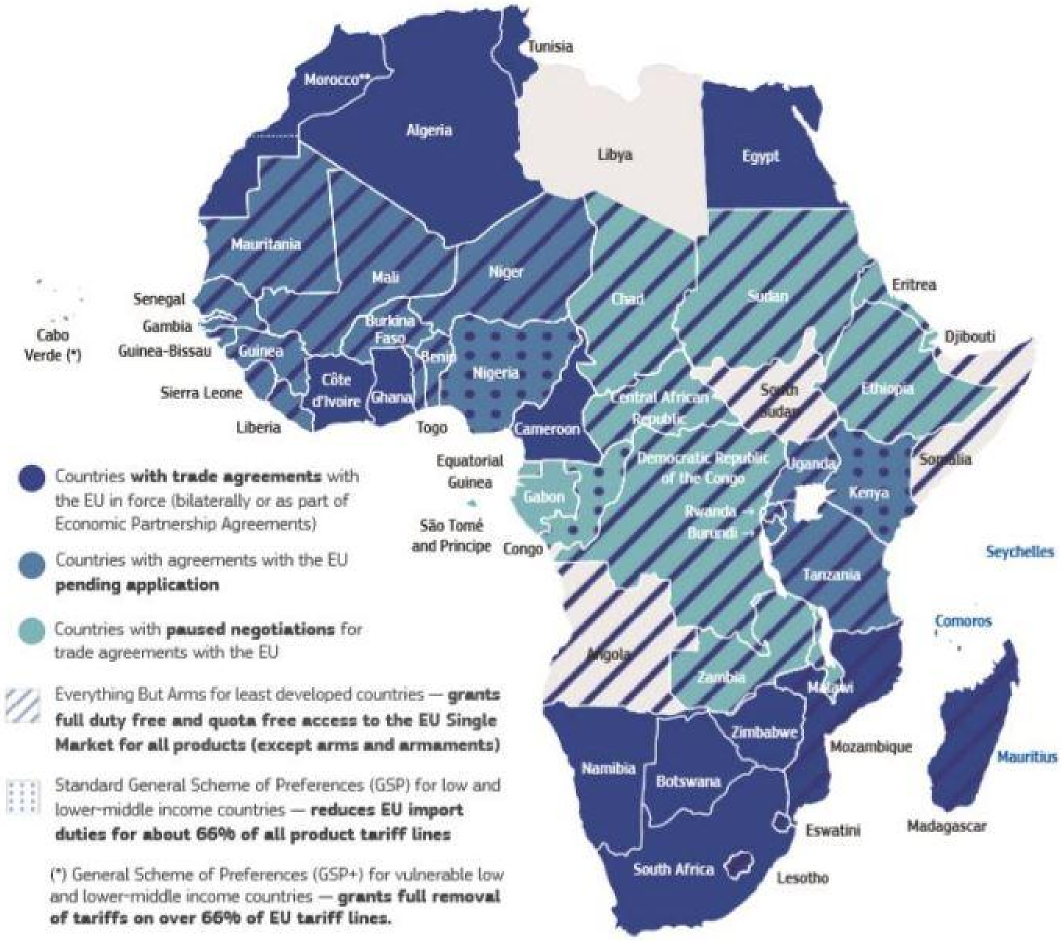


Figure 1 ("Towards a Comprehensive…" 8)

Following the EU-AU Summit, European business organizations met with their African counterparts to address the role of the private sector in future development strategies. The 7th EU-Africa Business Forum (EABF) took place on the 16th and 17th of February 2022 in Brussels; conversations emphasized the need for sustainable investment in the private sector, especially in meeting the needs of businesses recovering from the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic ("Joint Declaration…" 1-2). The EABF similarly centered free trade agreements between the two continents and needs of African youth and women, yet from the perspective of business needs. The document produced from the Forum also urged member states of the EU and AU to “invest in education and seek a closer involvement of the private sector so that the education systems and school curricula meet current and future business and scientific needs” (“Joint Declaration…” 2). The overarching themes between the EABF and the EU-AU Summit thus reflect the many overlapping areas of focus that the EU and AU intend to address in their ongoing and future partnerships.

While the EU and AU have aspirational goals for advancing African development, the EU’s existing initiatives and investments have been less positive. The EU, as a leading player in the United Nations and global peacekeeping efforts, likewise champions peace on the African continent. Despite significant investments, the European Union and its member states have produced mixed results through various peace-making efforts. The results suggest that the EU “lacks the capacity to play an effective military role in the promotion of peace and security in Africa” as a result of inadequate resources and the lasting “profound distrust and suspicion in Africa of European efforts to intervene in the continent’s affairs” given colonial histories (Paterson & Virk 23). Moreover, peacekeeping interventions made by the EU on the continent have been criticized for failing to address the root causes of the conflicts (Paterson & Virk 26). These critiques confirm that the EU has yet to overcome its reputation for exploitation in many corners of the African continent.

The inner workings of the EU also suggest shifts in the future of EU-AU partnerships. France and Britain were the two most significant players in colonizing Africa, and their prominent influence is widely regarded to have continued within the EU’s African policies as well. Analysts suggest that France and Britain have leveraged their prominence “to further their own national interests in the continent,” which means that Brexit will result in a focal shift toward the Sahel and broader West Africa — the site of former French colonies (“Africa and

Europe…" 6). Beyond Brexit, the EU has also experienced significant movement in migration policies. In order to understand the implications that changing migration policies have on European engagement with African development, we must first look at the Cotonou Agreement.

The Cotonou Agreement, signed in 2000, governs the partnership between the EU and 79 countries from sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, known as the ACP ("Africa and Europe…" 10). Recently extended three years and set to expire at the end of June 2023 ("ACP-EU Partnership"), the Cotonou Agreement is closely tied to the European Development Fund and has notably "recognized and encouraged the ongoing regional integration in West Africa and the ongoing cross-border economic ties in the region" (Uzelac 2). One of the organizations leading the charge on strengthening the cross-border economic integration in West Africa is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS is widely considered to be "one of the most advanced expressions of regionalism in Africa, particularly regarding the free movement of people" (Uzelac 1).

Consequently, the changing EU stance on migration has direct implications for the organizations it has partnered with previously. Indeed, "the EU policies aimed at curbing migration may slow down the development processes that the EU perceives as one of the root causes of migration" (Uzelac 8). Furthermore, they "may also lead to a weakening of economic coping mechanisms within these countries, leading to increased potential migratory pressures" (Uzelac 8). These impacts reflect the reality that both the past and present of the EU have immense influence on the African intra- and inter-continental movement of money, people, and power. The EU, in many respects, has fallen short in its efforts to effect change across Africa, yet it has successfully centered itself as a key development partner through various partnerships and investments. As such, African foreign policy perspectives from the EU must be considered both in how they reflect a shift in colonial-era engagement with the continent, as well as in how they achieve the development goals openly set forth.

IV. New Players on the African Continent

While foreign countries previously entangled in colonizing the continent are re-engaging and actively taking their previous relationship into account when forging new agreements, there is a concomitant wave of new players on the continent. These countries — primarily China, Russia, and the United States — do not have an explicit history of colonization on the African continent and thus the terms of their involvement is less predicated upon avoiding the indiscretions of their past. The distinction between these relationships shapes how the development programs evolve and grow across the continent, as well as how transparent these foreign countries have to be with their motives. Having said this, it is important to note that many observers have drawn parallels between age old colonial practices and new incarnations of these asymmetrical relationships. Moreover, each of these foreign players have their own relationships and agreements with one another, which further complicates their interactions with African countries and the motivation for becoming involved.

A. China

One of the leading investors in African development programs is China, who is primarily focused on infrastructure projects. One leading estimate is that the Chinese government "accounted for 31 percent" of all construction projects valued at or above $50 million in Africa in 2020 (Kenny). China has dominated in total contracts awarded by the World Bank, especially in regards to Civil Works projects (see Figure 2). This proportion has only increased over time, which reflects China's increasing interest and success in building infrastructure in foreign countries.

Figure 2 (Kenny)

The African continent has been a particular focus of Chinese infrastructure projects. Chinese lenders have invested more than twice the amount of all other development banks combined, providing $23bn for African infrastructure between 2007 and 2020 ("Chasing the Dragon…"). The People's Republic of China has myriad motivations for investing so heavily in the African continent — all of which are critical to understand when considering the role of China in the future of African development. One of the leading reasons is China's rather complex position in the global power landscape. While China is one of the leading economic superpowers upon which many leading countries rely on for trade and manufacturing, its history of human rights violations and oppression are very high profile in the global playing field. Most notably, China has been denied positions of power, such as a seat on the UN Security Council, for its refusal to acknowledge Taiwan as an independent country (Alden 5). As a result, many suggest that Chinese diplomacy in Africa through its development investments is an attempt to unseat Taiwan and lay “the foundation for its ascension to international standing” (Alden 5). Given its increasing attention on the continent, it is undeniable that China views African leaders as a metaphorical throughway into their own global power ascension.

One other primary way that China is achieving its hold in various countries on the African continent is by making African leaders more reliant on China for trade. Over the decade between 2009 and 2019, trade between Africa and China increased $10 billion to a total of nearly $170 billion (see Figure 3). While it is beneficial for Africa to become more engaged in trade with global superpowers to assert its place as an up-and-coming superpower in its own right, the reality is that “a key dynamic of this trade relationship - and one that African countries are very conscious of - is its inequitable nature” (Prinsloo 3). Africa exports most commodities such as oil and metal, whereas it imports manufactured and processed items. China, in a sense, forces African leaders’ hands into this economic cooperation through its immense investment in infrastructure projects that African countries are actively working to advance. Infrastructure is a primary focus of many African leaders because it is a “major enabler of economic growth and development” (Prinsloo 5). The African leaders’ reliance on Chinese investments becomes even more entrenched with China’s position as the “largest single source of financing after African governments themselves,” with infrastructure commitments exceeding $25.6 billion in 2018 (Prinsloo 5). Especially as African leaders aspire to have more control over their future status in global decision-making, their uneven relationship with China becomes one to assess critically in the coming years.

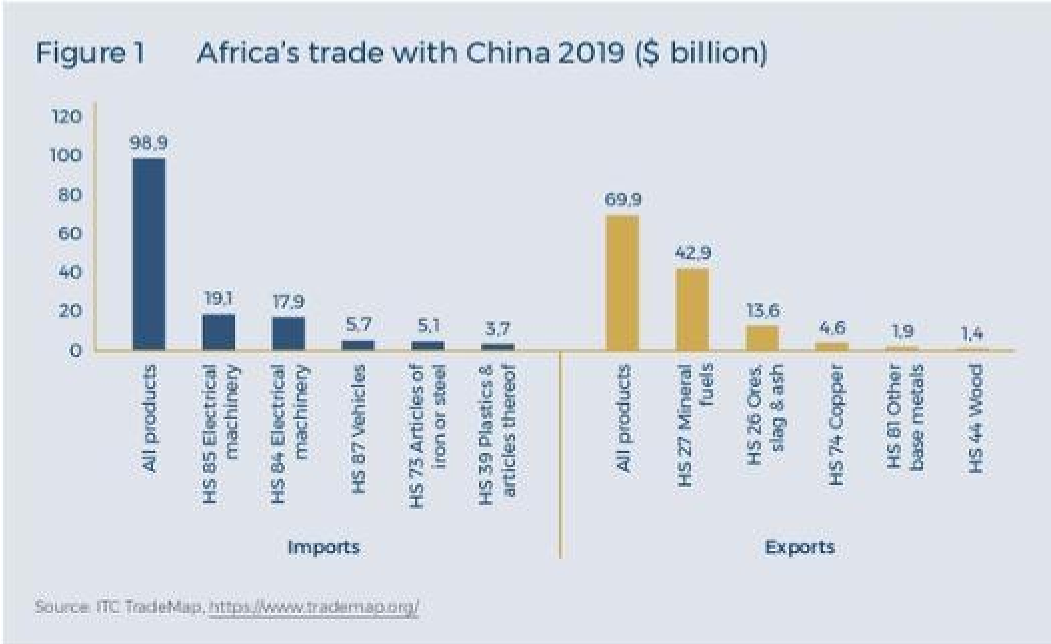


Figure 3 (Prinsloo 3)

Chinese infrastructure investment in Africa is spread across multiple different initiatives, however, the leading program is the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched a decade ago in 2013 by President Xi Jinping, has been one of China's primary methods of expanding its economic and political influence across the globe over the past decade (McBride et al.). Sometimes referred to as the "New Silk Road," China developed the BRI as a way to physically connect Asia and Europe and has since expanded to Africa, Oceania, and Latin America (McBride et al.). Many outsiders view the BRI as the most concentrated effort from China to force leaders in economically rising countries to side with China in major global decisions.

As previously mentioned, China's relationship with Taiwan and its refusal to acknowledge the nation as anything more than an extension of the PRC government is a particularly divisive topic across global leaders. The United States has been historically supportive of Taiwan's nationhood, contributing to the decision to deny China a seat on the UN Security Council. With such influential global superpowers expressing opposition against them, China hopes to use the BRI as a means of securing support from countries that cannot monetarily afford to disagree. Leveraging its debt financing method for infrastructure projects abroad, "China also frequently retains the right to demand repayment at any time, giving Beijing the ability to use funding as a tool to enforce Chinese hot button issues such as Taiwan or the treatment of Uyghurs," who are facing genocide and detainment in the Chinese region of Xinjiang (McBride et al.; "Who are the Uyghurs…"). In effect, China is buying global support through its BRI infrastructure investments to secure larger geopolitical influence, and this must be seen as a long-term strategy.

Looking to the future, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation lays out what the primary foci of the relationship between China and African leaders will be in the coming years. Established in 2000, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is a leading effort to illustrate partnership between China and fifty-three African states — notably excluding Eswatini for its ties to Taiwan (Yu). FOCAC claims to ensure equal partnership between all actors involved, yet "the comparative weight of China's state capacity effectively dictates fifty-three pairs of bilateral relationships under a single architecture" (Yu). The second phase of FOCAC, which took place between 2006 and 2015, placed an emphasis on foreign direct investment, particularly as a component of the newly introduced Belt and Road Initiative. The dialogue at the most recent FOCAC Summit in 2021, however, notably marked a shift in focus away from increasing infrastructure investment and toward trade financing (Sun). Development experts posit that this shift can be attributed to loan repayment challenges, as well as the economic impact of COVID-19 on the Chinese economy (Sun). Regardless, China shows no indication of slowing its soft power efforts as a way to enhance its influence on the African continent.

B. Russia

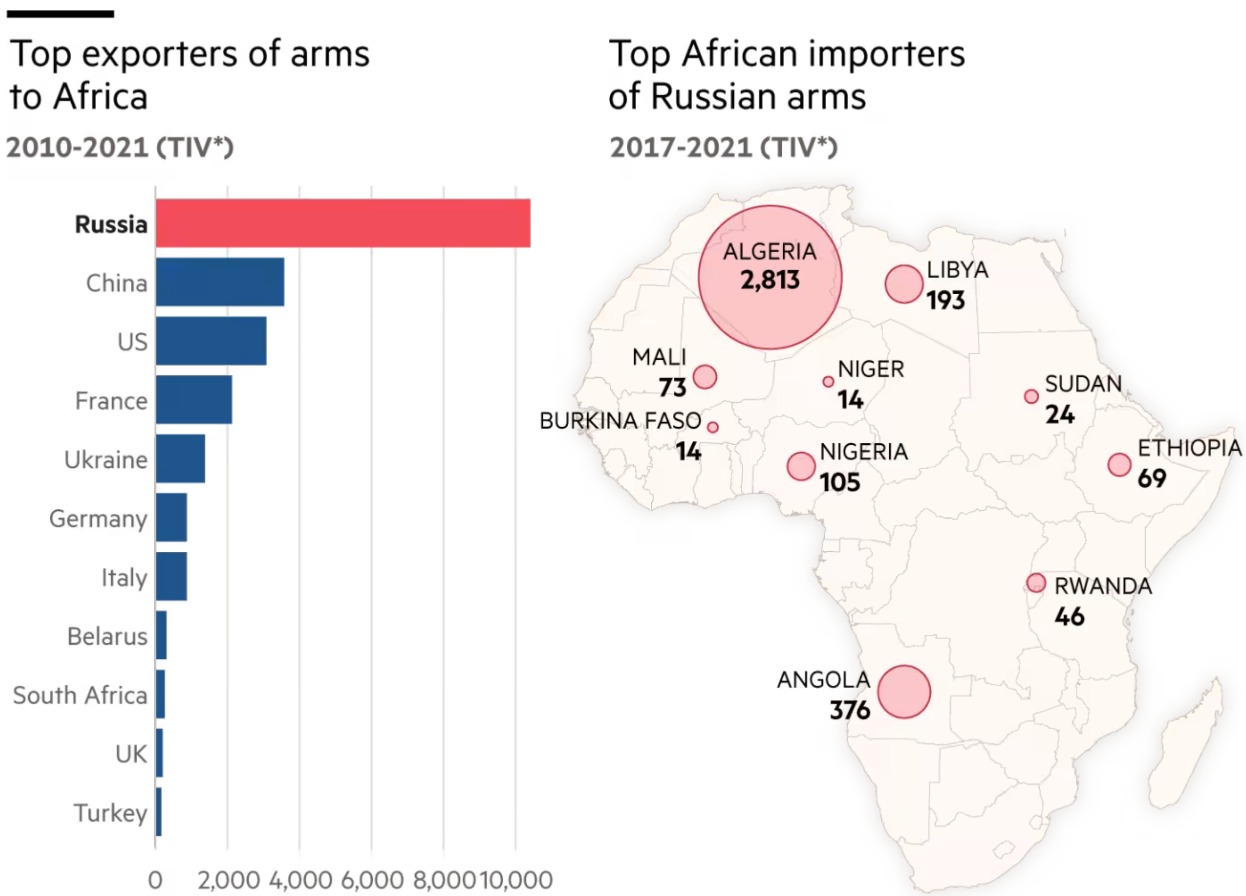
Another emerging power on the African continent is Russia, a country that has adopted a different approach to engaging African leaders and exerting influence in multiple African countries. Although Russia had some presence in Africa during colonial years with a colony in Djibouti in the late 1880s (Ramani 4), it was far from being a significant leading colonial power. As such, their involvement in Africa today should be understood to be that of a relative newcomer and therefore assessed from the same perspective as China and the United States. Russia has now engaged with multiple different countries and regions across the African continent, and each comes with their own history and intention. For instance, Russia has historically been chiefly preoccupied with North African countries. As I will consider more in-depth, Russian interest in most of Africa is rooted in resources, trade, and conflict. Russian interest in North Africa, in contrast, is far more concerned with politics, with many concluding that North Africa is "considered by Russia as part of its broader Eurasian neighborhood" (Alden & Sidiropoulos 7). As a result, the Russian government aims to secure geopolitical control over North African states as it does with other surrounding territory such as Ukraine and Crimea.

Russian engagement in the rest of Africa, however, is far more aligned with its broader foreign engagement goals, such as those in Latin America. To understand the goals of the Russian government in becoming involved abroad, it is critical to consider the circumstances under which they began their relations. Following significant diplomacy and relationship-building efforts with African leaders during the Cold War, Russian President

Vladimir Putin's 2006 visit to the continent marked the beginning of the current era of Russian involvement in Africa (Alden & Sidiropoulos 8). This era was set into motion by two significant actions: the Russian government forgiving billions of dollars in debt held by African states as a result of Cold War agreements and Putin appointing dedicated foreign affairs representatives for the continent. These two actions swiftly set the stage for an era of Russian involvement characterized by cooperation in the name of advancing "Russia's broader geopolitical interests" in addition to its existing commercial ties (Alden & Sidiropoulos 8).

One of the primary points of focus for Russia in its engagement with African states is in conflict arbitration. Some researchers describe Russian resurgence in the continent as "opportunistic," emphasizing how the up-and-coming global superpower has "capitalized on state fragility and protracted conflicts" (Ramani 2). This characterization is not exclusive to the most recent Russian resurgence. Opportunistic action in Africa appears to be a trend for the Russians; the former Soviet Union took advantage of decolonization beginning in the mid-1950s to establish itself as a prominent player in Africa leading up to the Cold War (Ramani 2). Through the Cold War to the current era, Russia has taken a different approach than China in securing geopolitical influence across the African continent, opting to focus on war and conflict instead of infrastructure. As Samuel Ramani summarizes, "Russia has positioned itself as a crisis-proof partner for countries facing economic isolation, deploying private military contractors to influence the trajectory of local conflicts in its favor and amplifying its role as a conflict arbiter" (2). Both Russia and China have solidified their role as countries for African leaders to turn to for development needs, albeit in different areas of focus.

Many have argued against Russia's importance and influence on the continent, citing the high levels of competition the nation faces in terms of competing development partners. These arguments also cite the lack of Russian dominance over trade when compared to China and other leading global importer/exporters. As of 2021, Russian trade with Africa totaled $15.6bn, which pales in comparison to Chinese trade with the continent, a mere ten percent of the latter's trade value (Wilson). Yet, further emphasizing the Russian focus on conflict, the nation is the leading arms exporter to sub-Saharan Africa (Wezeman et al. 8). In fact, they are far and away the largest exporter of weapons to Africa as a whole (see Figure 4). Thus while some argue that Russia is "lagging far behind most [other foreign powers] in terms of trade, investment, development aid, and cultural recognition" (Olivier 20), the reality is that the nation is more strategic with their involvement and actively succeeding in capturing control in the realm of conflict.



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute *Trend-indicator value is a bespoke metric based on weapons production costs used to represent the transfer of military resources.
© FT

Figure 4 (Wilson)

Moreover, Russian involvement on the African continent is nevertheless recognized as a threat to democratic efforts pushed by countries like the United States. Their military engagement has been a source of concern to various American leaders, notably former US Security Advisor, John Bolton, who argued that it “undermines peace and security” across the continent (Olivier 20). The two powers — Russia and the United States — stand in stark opposition to one another, with Russia openly “decrying Western efforts to impose their values on African countries” (Ramani 9). As I will show when considering the role of the United States in African development programs, both the United States and Russia are guilty of involving themselves in local politics in a wide array of African countries in order to serve their own goals of strengthening their roles as global superpowers by securing widespread support and influence to sway global decisions in their favor by whatever means necessary.

Another point of concern for Russia on the African continent is access to natural resources. In fact, Russian involvement in Africa has been strategically devised to bolster their economic stability by securing control in three areas: “mining concessions, lucrative arms deals, and anti-Western partners to hedge against the impact of US and European sanctions.” (Ramani 2) These concessions have primarily been for platinum, gold, and diamond mines (Ramani 8). In the current era of Russian involvement on the continent, control has been achieved by stepping into regimes at points of particular instability and turmoil. This has been especially true in the wake of the war on Ukraine, given that Russia does not have the resources to deploy their own forces on the ground. In their place, “mercenaries recruited and paid by the Wagner Group, a private army run by President Vladimir Putin's long-time associate Yevgeny Prigozhin,” have taken charge by forcibly asserting Russian presence in African countries (Patta & Carter).

Wagner mercenaries have exchanged their support for illegitimate and anti-democratic regimes within the larger Sahel region (see Figure 5) for unrestricted access to the nation's natural resources, which in turn fund other Russian military initiatives including the Ukraine War (Patta & Carter).

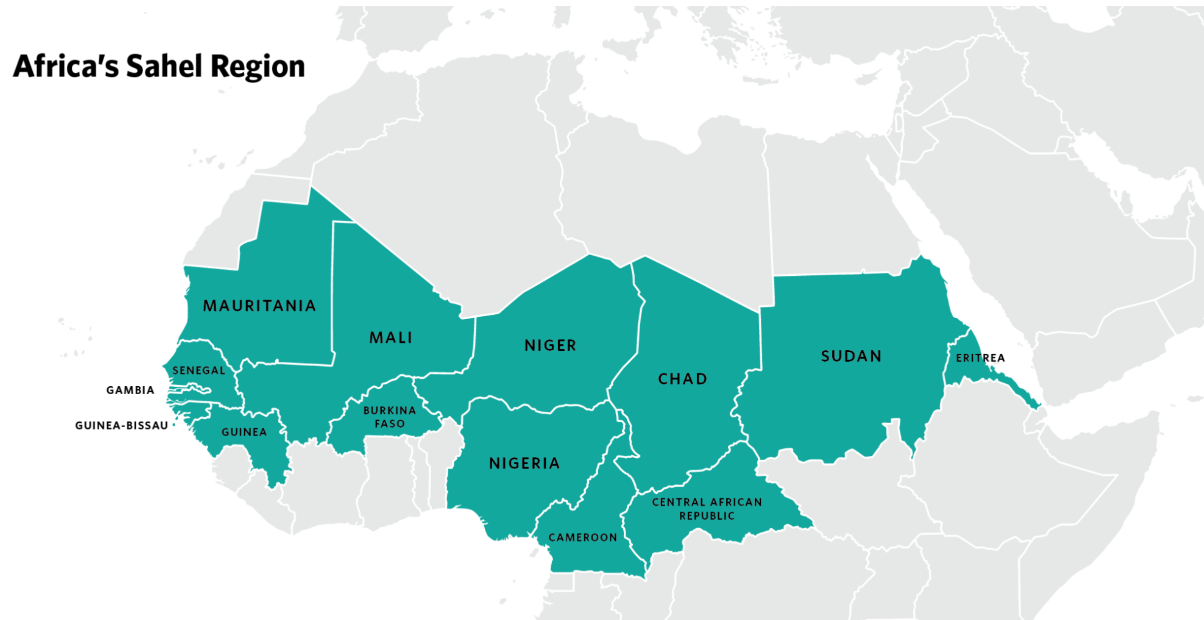


Figure 5 (Stronski)

More recently, Russia and Wagner mercenaries have concentrated their efforts in the Central African Republic using the same method of encouraging destabilization for exploitation opportunities. It is important to note, however, that this destabilization of regimes results in "stunted economic development, human rights abuses, disenfranchisement of African citizens, the perpetuation of illegitimate governments, and social polarization" (Siegle). Thus, while Russian involvement on the African continent is critical to consider when assessing the future of development in Africa, their investments should not be understood as productive development programs, but rather as exploitative initiatives that serve the Russian government's goal of obtaining increased global influence.

Furthering Russian control over the continent are their agreements with African leaders in relation to energy. Russia is leading the charge on nuclear energy, profiting off of the knowledge that many African states are facing an energy crisis where their production does not meet growing demand. Egypt, for example, "borrowed 85 percent of the construction cost from Russia" to finance a $29 billion nuclear plant (Gopaldas 14). Furthermore, Russia has signed nuclear cooperation agreements with a third of the continent, including countries with democratic governments (Gopaldas 14). In addition to nuclear energy, Russia has a hold on many African countries through fuel. Recent reports accuse Moroccan energy companies of mixing Russian exports with domestic fuel in response to extraction challenges and desires to improve profits (de Vernou). In summary, Russia and its affiliates rely on unstable regimes to properly exploit African natural resources, echoing the strategies of former colonial powers. They move in at the opportune time in order to ensure African reliance on Russia, which — regardless of investments in sustainable energy — undermine and counteract development initiatives made in the countries by local and foreign groups alike.

C. United States

The United States has long touted its status as a leader in providing development-focused aid to countries across the globe, and the African continent is no exception. A significant portion of these funds (donations and investments) are made under the aegis of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), whose focus spans a wide array of global challenges. US development projects on the African continent receive considerable attention, although "American foreign investment in Africa stands at about 1 percent of total United States investment globally" (Babarinde & Wright 28). Despite this relatively minimal investment, the

United States stands among China and Russia as a global superpower seeking to secure support and influence through active involvement with African leaders and investment projects.

The United States is a relative newcomer in comparison to European Union member countries, yet their presence in Africa predates that of China. Initial American activity in Africa was largely reactionary; the continent became a battleground between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, with each fighting for ideological control and global dominance. American interests in halting the spread of communism effectively superseded its claims of being an "anti-colonial power" with the express goals of promoting democracy and socio-economic development in Africa (Daniel & Nagar 9). In direct opposition to its purported mission, the United States supported autocratic regimes in Libera, modern-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea while "providing financial support in fighting proxy wars in Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, and Somalia" (Daniel & Nagar 9). Regardless of the United States' claims, the first era of American involvement in Africa was reflective of a larger trend of meddling with overseas politics and power dynamics in order to push American ideological and military superiority.

In the decades since the Cold War, the United States has made a more concerted effort to follow through with the goals they set in advancing economic, social, and political development across Africa. One of the largest initiatives has been in promoting trade between African countries and the United States. Introduced in 2000, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) aims to promote economic development in Africa by incentivizing free market trade (Babarinde & Wright 23). To this end, the act has been successful in increasing trade, yet it has fallen short in revolutionizing economic performance across the continent. Nevertheless, the United States has expanded its investment in various business and trade-related initiatives through USAID. Such initiatives include the African Global Competitiveness Initiative, Feed the Future Agricultural Aid Program, and African Women's Entrepreneurship Program (Babarinde & Wright 29). Entrepreneurial programs have been an increasing area of focus for U.S. investment in Africa in an attempt to spur economic development in a more transparent manner.

Although the United States does not use access to natural resources and political control as collateral for their investments, it has shifted the focus to energy projects. Similar to Russia and China, the United States recognizes the growing need for reliable energy across Africa. Exacerbated by COVID-19, access to energy is dwindling as infrastructure is not adequately equipped to meet the demands that accompany increasing population sizes. As estimated by the World Bank, "Africa's largest infrastructure deficit can be found in the power sector, whether measured in terms of generation capacity, electricity consumption, or security of supply" (Adam 1). This lack of access has far-reaching implications for both the local communities and governments that sell energy resources like fuel to establish their place in the global economy. Furthermore, energy challenges impact broader development efforts because "poverty and inequality in most countries can be traced to differential access to electricity particularly between the urban rich and poor, between urban and rural areas and between developed and underdeveloped communities" (Adam 2). Therefore, investing in sustainable and reliable energy options in Africa is critical for the United States to prevent backsliding of progress made by previous development investments.

The larger effort to address energy inequities on the continent is former President Barack Obama's Power Africa Initiative, announced in 2013. The Power Africa Initiative, which included a $7 billion commitment over the first five years, "promises to provide relief to African people who have been in darkness for most of their lives" (Adam 3). With an initial focus on only six countries — Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, and Tanzania — the initiative certainly does not address the needs of the entire continent. Babarinde & Wright highlight the challenges that Power Africa faces in being successful, specifically noting its reliance on support from the private sector and slow movement as a result of its emphasis on renewable energy sources (28). While these investments are necessary for the United States to contribute meaningfully to future prospects for the African economy, Power Africa and other energy investments are no more purely noble deeds than any other American foreign direct investment (FDI). It is instead part of a larger goal to reshape the perception of the U.S. in the larger FDI space as a prominent player akin to the EU and China, and "should therefore be seen as a strategic move to establish US influence" (Adam 5). As much as it does benefit the U.S. to boost economies across Africa, the reality is that the African continent remains a battleground for establishing global dominance.

Mirroring their behavior during the Cold War, American engagement and investment in Africa has yet again become incredibly reactionary. In fact, the very beginning of the current engagement style and programs that have emerged from it is rooted in competition. It was not until after multiple respective summits held between the leaders of Africa and the leaders of the EU and China that former President Obama welcomed African leaders for a US-Africa Summit (Babarinde & Wright 28). The United States is undoubtedly threatened by the increasing relationships and agreements between African governments and other global superpowers — especially China. Repeating a sentiment widely held by many prominent Republican politicians in recent years, former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton criticized Chinese investment in infrastructural development across Africa as "driven by "bribes, opaque agreements," and "the strategic use of debt" to extract favorable concessions from African states" (Cimmino 18). In addition to direct critiques, many experts believe the United States' "new Africa policy indicates a bid for primacy over China on the continent, casting the United States as a stronger and more reliable economic partner" (Cimmino 18). It is evident that American leaders recognize the steadily increasing hold that China has on African governments, and which they perceive as a direct threat to the continuation of American primacy in international politics.

In addition to the future status of the United States in the international arena, Chinese influence on the African continent also represents a threat to a priority for the U.S. and which it continues to champion, namely anti-terrorism initiatives. Much of the American global identity is rooted in the fight for democracy and against terrorism, which is an increasing concern in many African states. Whereas transparent and democratic governance on the continent remains a concern, the emergence of terrorist groups has become an even greater source of concern. Al-Shabab and Boko Haram have taken control in the Western Sahel and Mozambique, while "the Islamic State's West African Province, among others, have destabilized entire regions" (Madeira 1). U.S. foreign policy chiefly promotes global security, standing in direct opposition to the spread of terrorism and the governments that foster it. As a result, China's approach to providing foreign aid is a "growing security concern" for the United States (Conteh-Morgan 43). In an effort to encourage African leaders to favor China, Chinese investments impose very few conditions and conveniently ignore corruption and human rights violations. This feigned ignorance, paired with the sheer quantity of aid that China provides, makes China an extremely attractive partner for many African leaders, which directly undermines the American effort to promote the spread of democracy across the continent.

In response to Chinese investment strategies across Africa, the United States founded AFRICOM in 2007. AFRICOM was conceived specifically with the goal of acting as the antithesis to Chinese development in Africa, focusing on two primary objectives: “to prevent the proliferation of terrorist groups in Africa through cooperation with local governments, and to compete with China’s growing diplomatic, political, economic and cultural presence in Africa” (Conteh-Morgan 48). Chinese presence in Africa has increased dramatically in the past decade and a half, so AFRICOM has not facilitated the dramatic shift toward American control on the continent it had originally hoped for. American efforts to hamper the proliferation of Chinese deals with African leaders have also not proven to be successful, keeping the United States in a period of reactionary relationship and development building across Africa.

China is not the only country whose foreign policies undermine American efforts to secure loyalty from African leaders. Russia declaring war on Ukraine has exacerbated multiple crises in Africa, including security concerns, fuel price increases, trade disruption, and overall macroeconomic instability. These direct impacts have larger implications for issues that have been at the forefront of foreign development investments. For example, the spike in global gas and oil demand as a direct result of the move away from Russian energy sourcing, has in fact “undermine[d] progress towards ensuring a just transition to sustainable energy sources” and may cement the disparity in access to energy across the African continent (“The Impact of…” i). The United Nations Development Programme’s Regional Bureau for Africa (UNDP RBA) cautions that these impacts would, in the long and short term, “constrain overall economic activity and could trigger social tensions and unrest” (“The Impact of…” i).

Despite the direct and indirect impacts of the Russian war on Ukraine, the extent of Russia’s hold on multiple African countries was apparent in their openly-voiced support for the war. In a vote held by the United Nations for the Russia-Ukraine resolution, twenty-eight African countries voted to support Russian aggression (see Figure 6).

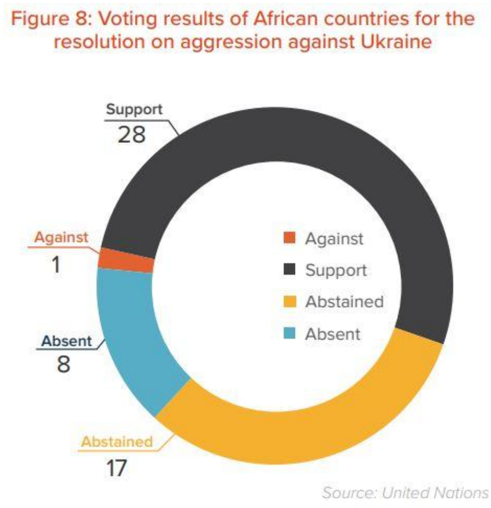


Figure 6 (“The Impact of…”)

The UNDP RBA suggests that these voting patterns “reveal a possible return to Cold War-type strategic alliances that could re-define geo-political realities on the [African] continent,” and “raise some concerns regarding the possibility of a return of authoritarianism on the continent, and a weakening of democracy” (14-15). Thus, not only are China and Russia gaining more of an economic foothold across Africa, but they are also generating a dependent relationship in which African leaders are willing and ready to support them in decisions that impact the global power dynamic. Control is quickly falling into the hands of two of the United States’ longest-standing ideological adversaries.

With the recognition that the African continent is a key geopolitical component in determining the future of the global power landscape, the Biden Administration has taken steps to secure partnerships with key African countries. On December 13-15 in 2022, President Joe Biden welcomed forty-nine of Africa’s leaders for the most recent edition of the U.S.-Africa

Leaders Summit ("U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit"). President Biden solidified his administration's policy perspective in approaching African diplomacy during his remarks, asserting that "Africa belongs at the table in every room — in every room where global challenges are being discussed and in every institution where discussions are taking place" ("Remarks by President…"). However, more recently, African leaders have also been welcomed in Beijing with the stated purpose of continuing "bilateral high-quality, practical cooperation to the benefit of the people" of Africa and China ("Qin Gang: China…"). The primary areas of focus within this cooperation lie in trade partnerships and infrastructure development, and China aims to keep their partnership active by supporting African governments in regional issues and advocating for an African presence in the United Nations.

In response to the growing Chinese and Russian influence on the continent, the Biden Administration hopes to win back loyalty by supporting permanent representation for Africa on the United Nations Security Council. At the Summit, President Biden also announced the $55 billion commitment the U.S. intends to make toward Agenda 2063, a comprehensive set of goals for African development ("Remarks by President…"). Many have highlighted the presence of African leaders with a history of crimes against humanity (Gramer & Nodjimbadem), suggesting that the United States is willing to take a similar approach as other foreign countries in ignoring glaring anti-democratic practices to cement the U.S. at the top of the emerging geopolitical order.

V. Unique Case of South Africa

In terms of development programs across the continent, specifically when considering government partnerships with NGOs, the country of South Africa offers especially compelling examples and unique characteristics. Most notably, South Africa diverges from other African countries because of its history of apartheid. Officially instated in 1948, apartheid was the process whereby the white European minority population divided up the black African majority population to diffuse their power and influence over the minority white population (Henrard 38). The process enabled the white population to assume control and give themselves privilege afforded by disempowering the black population. The white population implemented a “divide and rule” policy by assigning South Africans to one of “four major racial categories: white, black/African, colored, and Indian/Asian” (Henrard 38). The black/African categorization was further divided into ethnicities, which allowed for the “separate development” initiative, or Great Apartheid, to specifically discriminate against certain ethnicities in politics, education, and countless other areas.

Coming to an official end in 1994, the history of apartheid continues to inform the structuring of development programs and government initiatives in South Africa in ways that other countries do not experience. For example, the South African government has implemented the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policy. The intended purpose of the government policy is to “advance economic transformation and enhance the economic participation of black people in the South African economy” (“Broad-Based Black…”). The B-BBEE policy translates into grading businesses on their efforts to promote and encourage racial equality in and across their business operations. South African businesses are assigned a BEE score, which is based on black inclusion in five key aspects: ownership, management control, skills development, enterprise development and supplier development, and socio-economic development (“Broad-based black…”). Such policies effectively federally mandate corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, which sits in stark contrast to countries like the United States where CSR is entirely up to the individual business and not measured uniformly. Therefore, B-BBEE policies are one example of how the unique history of South Africa creates political and societal dynamics unlike surrounding African countries and Western countries.

However, the uniqueness of the South African context extends beyond its history of apartheid and into its status as a longer-standing democratic nation. Along with the end of apartheid, political shifts in 1994 brought with them the first democratic constitution for South Africa. Since then, the South African economic potential has steadily risen. Consequently, the country is considered to be an ideal location through which to build economic partnerships between the United States and the African continent. The United States has long hoped that South Africa could move the needle on social and economic reform across the continent, as well as in promoting American interests overseas (Carroll 12-13).

South Africa, for its part, is engaged in its own development efforts across the continent without the involvement of the United States. South Africa has provided considerable aid to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in an attempt to promote sustainable development across the country (Besharati & Rawhani 3). Although the recipient of the largest amount of funding, the DRC is just one of many countries that South Africa provides aid to through its Department of International Relations and Cooperation. Not only is South Africa a unique location through which Western countries like the United States can work through to effect change on the continent, but it is also in a unique position to engage in South-South cooperation to effect change through its own development efforts.

In addition to foreign countries, foreign businesses are likewise interested in the nation as a site for development. For example, Red Bull began their Amaphiko academy in 2014, operating in multiple cities around the world including Cape Town. The program, which draws its name from the Zulu word for “wings,” set out on a mission to support entrepreneurs and tell stories broadly to inspire others (Interview with Northrop). Initially fully funded by Red Bull, the program has now moved away from the company to become the independent organization FURTHER, which utilizes the same approach to human and entrepreneurial development as Amaphiko (“Programmes”). Although ultimately serving Red Bull’s marketing initiatives, the program had a tremendous impact on developing the startups of young entrepreneurs in South Africa, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Many of these startups, such as Trans Student Educational Resources, are still in operation to this day. Red Bull may no longer be interested in funding the program, however, the Amaphiko academies held in Soweto, Durban, and Cape Town provide evidence that South Africa remains an attractive nation to governments and corporations alike for economic and social development programs.

Through the Amaphiko academy, Red Bull and founder Ian Calvert sought to support social entrepreneurs in driving sustainable development in their local communities. The primary method of providing this support was in offering resources to the selected entrepreneurs with workshops, classes, and 1-on-1 mentoring. Gayle Northrop, president of Northrop Nonprofit Consulting and Adjunct Assistant Professor at the John E. Anderson Graduate School of Management, served as a mentor for four of the social entrepreneurs accepted into the academy. During an interview with her, she explained that all four of the entrepreneurs she mentored were at a “very early stage” (Personal Interview 4/18/23). In order to gain acceptance into the academy, which typically opened fifteen to twenty spots per cycle, the entrepreneurs needed to have some form of proof of concept for their business or organization, yet they did not need to demonstrate previous revenue or an outlined organizational structure.

Once accepted, the entrepreneurs began their year of consistent mentoring with coaches like Gayle Northrop before their work culminated into a two-week intensive academy which included “bonding activities; interpretive dance, movement lessons and therapy sessions, as well as practical advice classes for the entrepreneurs hoping to get their projects off the ground” (“How Red Bull’s…”). At the end of these two weeks, the social entrepreneurs reflected on their experience in the academy, including what they accomplished through mentoring and the progress they made in their project as a result of Amaphiko. Northrop recounted her involvement not only in the hands-on mentoring, but also in the structure of Amaphiko. When she initially joined, Red Bull Amaphiko did not have an “articulated theory of change,” so she assisted in developing a logic model through which the academy could operate. As an organization, Amaphiko never reached the point of conducting organized, thoughtful evaluations of the impact that the academy had on the entrepreneurs involved or their respective communities. Despite this lack of structured assessment, Northrop personally recognized that over the course of the mentoring and academy, each one of the entrepreneurs that she mentored grew tremendously personally and professionally.

While these personal accounts of positive impact are encouraging, the driving motivation behind Red Bull’s involvement in the Amaphiko project is important to account for when considering the viability of corporate-driven development programs. Ultimately, many social good programs as developed or funded by large corporations like Red Bull are preoccupied with increasing brand awareness and improving consumer perception of the brand. Red Bull specifically is recognized for their investments in competitive sports and the arts. One primary example is Red Bull’s involvement in Formula One racing. The company purchased their racing team from Jaguar in 2004 under an agreement that “stipulated that Red Bull would be required to invest $400 million over the subsequent three years" (Killingstad). Since then, they have acquired a second racing team, Toro Rosso, which are now both under the Red Bull Racing umbrella (Sylt). As of 2018, financial statements revealed that the company had invested over $2.3 billion into their two Formula One teams over the preceding fourteen years (Ibid). The motivation behind the massive ongoing investment in Formula One and funding of the Amaphiko project before its end are one and the same: getting eyeballs on their brand.

Their hopes of a considerable return on investment with these projects are not misplaced, as previous project successes indicate. One such example is that of their investment in the Stratos project, which set a record as the first time a human broke the sound barrier without an engine (Killingstad). Publicity around the stunt drove sales up 7% in the following six months for an additional $1.6 billion in the United States, which far exceeded the initial investment of time and money (Killingstad). Thus the impact that the Amaphiko academy had on social entrepreneurs and their communities across the world is commendable, yet the fact remains that Red Bull's involvement was primarily a marketing initiative.

Founder Ian Calvert described the impetus for the program in an interview, explaining that "around 2012, [Red Bull] approached us to say, 'look you know the the world is shifting; there's this new Millennial consumer who's expecting more of brands from a sort of social responsibility [sense]'" (Heavy Chef). Although Calvert and advisors like Northrop developed models to work toward supporting social entrepreneurs under the guiding principle that "people closest to the problem should be the people closest to the solution" (Heavy Chef), Red Bull invested in Amaphiko with the goal of attracting more young consumers to their products. This motivation should not detract from the impact that it had in supporting communities and entrepreneurs, yet it is indicative of a larger trend in corporate social good programs:

corporations may engage in other, profitable activities that contradict the program's stated goal or shut down these programs once it no longer serves their marketing goals. Ian Calvert has been successful in rebranding the human development-focused work of Amaphiko under FURTHER, which commits itself to "building stronger humans who build stronger communities" ("FURTHER"), although there are other programs initially funded by corporations like Red Bull that no longer operate after losing that funding.

VI. Larger Corporate Social Responsibility Concerns

Especially within the last decade, corporations have poured millions of dollars into building a reputation for being a socially and environmentally-conscious entity through various internal programs and external partnerships. These programs range across multiple different pressing issues, from women's rights to biodiversity in the world's rainforests. Social good programs are another term for the programs developed under a corporate social responsibility (CSR) framework. Consumers are increasingly expecting that corporations have initiatives dedicated to reducing their negative impact on the environment and investing in supporting underfunded, disenfranchised, or discriminated groups of the population. These expectations are quickly translating into real-world action, with a 2018 report finding that 86% of S&P 500 companies published sustainability or CSR reports in 2018, compared to fewer than 20% in 2011 (Peterson et al.). Given the integral need for corporations to turn a profit in order to continue operations, many are skeptical of the true impact that these corporations have through their "social good" programs. Oftentimes, corporations publicize the positive investments and work they do to offset the attention on the contributions they are making to people or organizations that actively work to strip groups of the population of their rights, like The Walt Disney Company.

The Walt Disney Company openly touts their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion both internally and throughout the media industry. They have specifically taken part in Pride Month, selling variations of their popular items that include the LGBTQ+ pride flag color scheme. Moreover, they advertise the support that they provide to their queer employees and their commitment to queer diversity in media through their donations to GLAAD, the world's largest LGBTQIA+ media advocacy organization ("Community"). Meanwhile, The Walt Disney Company donated $129,472 to Donald Trump's presidential re-election campaign in 2020, in addition to $26,867 donated to Mitch McConnell in the same year ("Walt Disney Co…"). More recently, the corporation donated $250,000 to campaigns in support of the Florida "Don't Say Gay" bill (Lang). Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell both have a well-documented history of supporting and introducing anti-LGBTQ+ initiatives, making it a core tenant of their political stances, while the "Don't Say Gay" bill in Florida is a direct attempt to limit the rights of queer youth living in the state (Acosta; "Mitch McConnell"). As such, many corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs are increasingly being met with scrutiny regardless of the cause they are centered on.

There are far more implications for local communities when looking at corporate social good programs abroad. As a result, it is even more necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of these programs to understand whether their efforts abroad are genuinely beneficial to their targeted groups, or if they are part of a larger process of exploiting a community within an underdeveloped economic system. Important questions must be answered. Do corporate social good programs in African countries contribute toward sustainable and meaningful progress? Do they provide fleeting support without a long-term impact in reshaping the local infrastructure?

VII. **Challenges with African Development Programs**

While consideration for the motivation and histories of the countries engaging in development program investments is necessary and important, it is equally important to understand the shortcomings that many development efforts face. One of the leading challenges with development programs — in Africa and otherwise — is corruption. When specifically considering Africa, “bribery and corruption risks are deterring higher rates of investment and the ability of companies to conduct business fairly and on a level playing field” (Jackson). Corruption has become one of the most cited reasons for avoiding investment in various African governments and organizations, as well as one of the factors most attributed to lasting instability on the continent. There have been countless efforts designed to counteract and prevent corruption on every level, yet it remains rampant. One potential reason for this lack of success is a lack of localization of the issue, leading the Center for International Private Enterprise to recommend that “implementation of any anti-corruption measures should reflect the surrounding national and local context: culturally, politically, and economically” (Jackson). Corruption in different countries and communities cannot be explained by the same cause or motivation, and as such, it cannot all be addressed by a singular solution.

Nevertheless, corruption and the perception of it affects all facets of development and undermines efforts to achieve economic, social, and political progress in Africa. The issue is not contained to one country or region; Transparency International found that all but a handful of African countries fell under the worst corruption perception levels (see Figure 7).

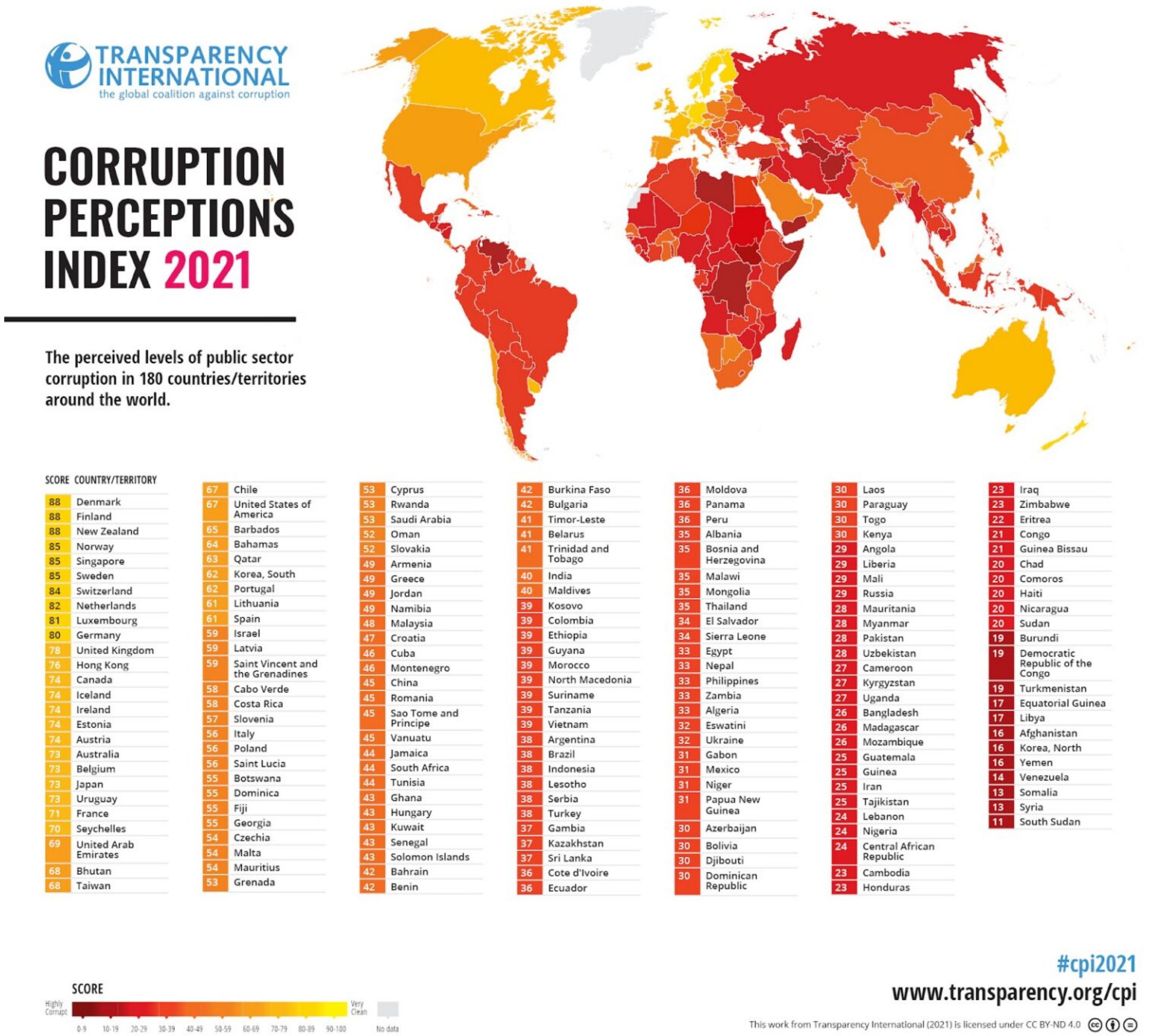


Figure 7 (Adebajo)

The perception of corruption and consequent distrust of officials leading the charge in development efforts extends beyond the government, impacting those in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well. The 2019 Global Corruption Barometer Africa report found that "one in five people in Africa think most or all NGO officials are involved in corruption" (Adebajo). Although mere perception appears inconsequential, it directly impacts communities' trust levels of government and NGO officials and leads to exaggerated data and low-impact projects in the long-term (Adebajo). In the same way that corruption affects governmental and non-governmental efforts, the problem must also be addressed by all affected. As summarized by United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime official Gillian Murray, "corruption is a plight that needs to be addressed together; governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations have the duty to ensure that acts of corruption do not take place at any level anywhere" ("African Civil Society…"). The onus is on all involved to reshape their levels of success and public perception of their work.

There is also a distinction to be made between larger, national and international NGOs and smaller, regional ones. While both bear the burden of transparency, the smaller NGOs do not have as much power to influence wider perceptions. As a result, those in the space have called upon the principled NGOs to "change the widespread narrative on their lack of accountability and ability to implement projects" to avoid "tarnish[ing] the reputation of their wider community" (Ambassa). With that being said, all NGOs have a role to play in encouraging transparency and eradicating corruption both internally and in government. For example, an NGO known as the Nigerien Organisations for Budgetary Transparency and Analysis identified and filed a lawsuit for $99 million in lost state funds ("Niger: NGOs Complain…"). Thus, NGOs and governments can each contribute toward a future with increased transparency and accountability by policing one another.

Shifting both the prevalence and perception of corruption within NGOs especially is critical given the international reliance upon them as primary drivers of progress. Following the Cold War, NGOs have been widely regarded as "key engines in processes of positive change, …unencumbered and untainted by the politics of government and the greed of the market"

(Smith 244). The amount of aid donations toward African NGOs have steadily increased — primarily as a result of growing perception that African governments are corrupt (Smith 244-248). Therefore, if we are to move toward a future in which NGOs produce reliable progress in concentrated development programs, there must be a concerted effort toward addressing corruption within NGOs from a local contextual perspective. Corruption, of course, must be addressed within governments as well. NGOs, however, may be a more achievable first target to enable them to make productive use of the aid received and situate them to be effective policers of government corruption as efforts are taken to address that sphere.

VIII. The Future of Development in Africa: Government-NGO Partnerships

As previously argued in regards to corruption, government-NGO partnerships are critical when looking to the future of development in Africa that is more sustainable and impactful. One reason for this necessity lies in the shift of development aid fund destinations. As Smith elucidated, many foreign investors turn to NGOs as a more effective alternative to working directly with governments (Smith 244). Echoing this sentiment, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) regards NGOs as "critical change agents in promoting economic growth, human rights and social progress" ("Non-Governmental Organizations"). Foreign governments and organizations already rely heavily on NGOs to effect change across the world, including Africa.

While this reliance will not shift overnight, co-founder of South Africa-based NGO Spark Health Gayle Northrop has identified "a shift to working with governments directly" in light of increasing corruption and unevenness in NGOs (Personal Interview 4/18/23). She explained, based on her first-hand experience in working directly with the South African government to eliminate mother-to-child HIV transmission, there is a growing need for governments to have ownership over solutions for the country's most pressing needs. There is an opportunity in this incoming transition to leverage the work and particular strengths of NGOs to improve the government's capacity to deliver impactful solutions housed within and operated by the government.

Within multiple different contexts, there has been a growing call for governments and NGOs to cooperate with one another to better serve the needs of communities across Africa. Prior analyses have highlighted the ways in which NGOs and governments can serve one another by playing to their respective strengths to account for weaknesses. Where governments have the capacity to scale and set national policies, NGOs can afford to take risks and innovate on existing processes (Gbeleou & Schechter). The scale and sustainability required to effect change cannot be achieved by one alone; examples of success such as Integrate Health in Togo reiterate that "achieving impact through the public sector at scale requires building genuine, bi-directional partnership" between government and NGOs in which both parties are engaged from the very beginning (Gbeleou & Schechter). Other key learnings from Integrate Health include the acknowledgement that government ownership of the solution "is absolutely critical to long-term success and sustainability," and that the NGO must "reinforce the public system, rather than build a parallel solution" (Gbeleou & Schechter). As evidenced with Integrate Health's cooperation with the government of Togo, there is a model under which NGOs and African governments can make effective use of their respective resources and funding to address the issue at hand in a more comprehensive and long-lasting manner.

This path forward is not without its own set of challenges. Other examples of NGO-government collaboration in the health system specifically have yielded positive results such as improvements in community health indicators, yet the process toward those achievements has been rocky and inconsistent (Rajabi et al. 2). An extensive study of different examples of NGO-government collaboration resulted in the identification of seventy challenges, "divided into five main themes: structural issues, process issues, as well as issues related to roles and responsibilities, trust and communications issues, and control and power relations issues and 11 subthemes" (Rajabi et al. 3)

As such, moving forward with an emphasis on NGO-government partnerships to address the shortcomings currently experienced in African development efforts is certainly not a perfect solution. It does, however, answer the growing need for collaboration to achieve real, lasting change across the continent. The current system of development efforts is fragmented, disjointed, and fraught with corruption. While this shift would not solve every issue faced in achieving sustainable and far-reaching development across all sectors, it would be a strong first step toward revolutionizing a broken system in which the funds allocated have more impact and internal and external forms of corruption alike are easier to identify and eradicate.

IX. <u>Conclusion</u>

Addressing development challenges across the African continent is an incredibly nuanced and complex task that cannot be achieved by any singular recommendation or actor. Rather, it will require collaborative engagement from hundreds of governmental and organizational actors to make a lasting, widespread impact. Not only must this engagement recognize the societal, political, and economic ills felt as a result of decades of colonial exploitation on the continent, but also take into account the local context of each challenge. It is only through those means will sustainable development have the environment necessary to take hold and reach the communities in the most need. Moreover, this collaborative effort would work to weaken attempts made by countries like Russia and China to expand their influence on the continent through development investments that cause more harm than solve any need.

More specifically, collaboration between African governments and related international, national, and regional non-governmental organizations is necessary to mitigate the inefficiencies and corruption of many development projects. Without these partnerships built upon a mutual understanding of creating the most opportunities and resources for the populations they serve, aid money will continue to go to waste and only achieve a fraction of the intended results. These partnerships will enable entire countries to better deliver on the objectives of foreign investors and bring the African Union closer to reaching the benchmark goals of Agenda 2063. There are countless other initiatives required to work in tandem with this movement to achieve real sustainable development for all African countries, yet this spirit of cooperation has the power to effect change by shifting expectations and perspectives of those operating in the space and those investing in change.

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