

have adopted from the Boris Yeltsin era to the present, as well as Russia's actions in the Middle East and the former Soviet Republics. The author should have explained in his study why he conducted open-ended interviews with the Russian and Iranian ambassadors in Lebanon. To assess Russia's position, it should

have also been required to interview diplomats from the former Soviet states and the Middle East. The book is worth reading by anyone interested, such as academics, journalists, and policymakers, students, who want to know about Russia's foreign policy, Syria, and the Middle East.

Russia in Africa: Resurgent Great Power or Bellicose Pretender?

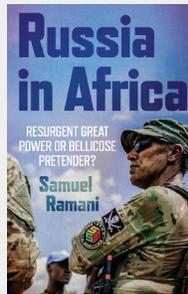
By Samuel Ramani

London: C. Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2023, 326 pages, \$52.00, ISBN: 9781787387072

Reviewed by Siyat Abdi Maalim, Social Sciences University of Ankara

Samuel Ramani's book deeply analyses Russia's connection with the African continent. It provides a comprehensive overview of the history of Russia-Africa ties, depicting their interactions, starting from the times of 16th century connections between the Russian Orthodox Church and Egyptian Coptic Christian communities as well as Russian and Egyptian Muslim communities' links to the times of Soviet Union support for the decolonization process of Africa. This well-written book is based on interviews and includes over 1300 references from academic and media sources in Russian, English, French, and Arabic from numerous African countries. The author provides a much-needed resource for understanding the dynamics of Russia's policy towards Africa and the understudied periods of Russian engagement with Africa, such as the 1990s and Putin's first two terms in office (pp. 2-24).

The emergence of a competitive and geopolitical rivalry among great powers in recent



years has led to increased interest and engagement of countries and organizations with Africa. Recognizing the continent's growing importance, Russia, under the leadership of President Putin, devised strategic policies to navigate this competitive landscape. Crucial to this endeavor was the groundwork laid by Yevgeny Primakov, Russia's foreign minister (1996-1998) and prime minister (1998-1999), who established the foundation for Moscow to restore its influence on the African continent (pp. 26-49).

Following the disengagement from Africa during the Soviet and Kozyrev eras, Putin adeptly managed domestic forces and orchestrated a significant shift in Russia's presence in the early 2000s. Throughout his first and second terms in office, Moscow reemerged as a prominent player in Africa, forging enduring alliances and cementing its position. Over the ensuing decade, Russia showcased its capabilities in challenging Western liberalism, resisting popular uprisings, extending

support to select countries in conflicts, and even deploying mercenary groups across the continent. In this manner, under Putin's leadership, Russia capitalized on the intensifying global rivalry for African influence and skillfully maneuvered its way back onto the stage as a significant actor, positioning itself as a counterweight to Western powers and exerting its influence in the African geopolitical landscape.

Ramani's Book consists of ten chapters that examine Russia's engagement with Africa. It begins with an introductory section exploring Russia's activities on the continent during the turbulent 1990s. The first three chapters provide an in-depth analysis of Russia's post-1991 African policy and its contemporary developments (p. 23). Chapter 4 examines how Russia's antagonism with the West, exacerbated by conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, influenced its African strategy and its relations with anti-Western governments. Chapter 5 focuses on Russia's resurgence in North Africa, specifically its ties with Libya, Morocco, Egypt, and Algeria, driven by its economic ambitions. Chapter 6 delves into Russia's resurgence at the start of Putin's fourth term, culminating in the 2019 Sochi Africa Summit. Chapter 7 explores Russia's utilization of various tools, such as mercenary groups, aid, election interference, and military trade. Chapters 8 and 9 analyze Russia's utilization of the COVID-19 vaccine in line with the Sochi Summit's objectives and the changing security dynamics in Africa, including interventions in Libya and the Central African Republic. The final chapter examines Russia's efforts to maintain cooperation with Africa amidst sanctions and explores African countries' responses to the 2022 Ukraine war.

Russia aimed to withstand Western pressure and sanctions after annexing portions

of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 by forming alliances with allies; as a result, Africa also became essential to its foreign policy dynamics in this regard. This gained traction as soon as it invaded Ukraine in 2022. Indeed, this was signified in Sergei Lavrov's visit to some African countries such as Ethiopia, Egypt, Uganda, and Congo-Brazzaville in July 2022 to promote the Kremlin viewpoints and the Arab League Summit in Algeria on July 25, 2022, in which he commented on the war as an attempt to free "the people of Eastern Ukraine" (p. 322).

The author highlights that Moscow's foreign policy is based on more than just diplomatic might. It also has a varied network of domestic actors, which includes influential entrepreneurs, the media, think tanks, and former government officials. The roles these organizations can play in the country's future foreign policy are evident, and contrary to popular belief, Moscow is not internally homogenous in its decision-making process.

The author argues throughout the book that Russia's quest to build a multipolar world drives it to Africa. He examines the differences between the perspectives of Putin's multipolar world order in Africa and genuine multilateralism. Russia has rejected multilateral cooperation under Putin's leadership. However, under Gorbachev and Yeltsin's leadership, the country supported international condemnations of dictators like Abacha, Robert Mugabe, and Gaddafi while fostering relations with Egypt and South Africa as they transitioned to democracy. Putin has demonized the West and undermined the UN to increase Russia's power.

Similarly, the book unpacks the complex issues surrounding this phenomenon. For example, the author argues that it can manipu-

late the situation once Moscow intervenes in other countries' affairs to support an ally. Here, the author gives Libya as an example of place where the Russian mercenary group has been deployed. Russia supported the Haftar forces in the second Libyan civil war in 2020 (p. 209). Following this conflict in Libya, Russia set foot in other regional areas, including the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Niger. In addition to the security partnership, it acquires resource opportunities such as gold, oil, and other minerals (p. 199).

Against this backdrop, one question arises concerning Russia's pursuit of a multipolar world. Moscow is pursuing its agendas by establishing a network of client governments capable of fulfilling its interests across the continent. However, this strategy may impede regional development in Africa.

The author also gives well-supported evidence for the topics of the book. He claims that Russia has employed soft power tools, arms sales, debt forgiveness, religious diplomacy, aid, hybrid warfare, and counterinsurgency operations to reestablish itself across the continent and emerge as a tremendous virtual power (pp. 199-222). Despite grave forecasts of international isolation and government collapse, he believes Russia-Africa ties are "poised to weather the storm clouds that accompanied its invasion of Ukraine" (pp. 293-321).

Russia worked on its relationship with Africa to improve its international standing through bilateral and transactional interactions and to pose itself as an alternative to the West in achieving its goal of multipolarity. Through the use of these mechanisms as mentioned above and given that Moscow was less concerned with other countries' domestic and human rights issues compared to the Western

countries; as a result, some governments benefited, with Sudan, Guinea, and Eritrea among the first that helped. Additionally, Russia has frequently emphasized its opposition to the imposition of sanctions by the U.S., UN, and the West on specific countries, as evidenced by its opposition to punitive actions directed at people like Omar al-Bashir and countries like Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Eritrea, and Zimbabwe (pp. 63-75).

This well-researched book offers an in-depth examination of Moscow's activities on the continent. Similarly, it gives helpful insights into the resurgence of interests in the new scramble for Africa, which many have likened to the first scramble in 1884.¹ In the final parts, the author discusses the developments following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, arguing that Russia's success on the continent will be limited due its lack of enough resources to compete with its peers. However, the continent will be an easy alternative for Russia to compete with the West and the U.S. Given that Moscow is so effective at counterbalancing Western hegemony and particularly American hegemony and because it thrives where chaos exists. It presents itself to authoritarian coup plotting generals and leaders in Africa as a trustworthy ally that can easily defeat extremists and political opponents (pp. 327).

The book has some flaws and shortcomings. One noticeable drawback is its occasional tendency toward excessive sobriety and methodic. The narrative might become overly concentrated on delivering a factual description of events, ignoring deeper analytical engagement at times. In its dedication to historical and contemporary investigations of Russia's approach to African partners, the book occasionally overlooks opportunities to delve into the deep causes behind specific

encounters. While the comprehensive notes and index show attention to research, there is a remarkable absence of critical thinking on the ramifications of Russia's actions in Africa. As a result, the book falls short of properly illuminating the complexity underlying the significance of various Russian officials' travels to African countries. Another fault is the author's overestimation of Russia's impending domination in Africa. The author's criticism stems from his apparent indifference to the significant challenges caused by war-induced economic disruptions and strained relations between Russia and African countries. A more nuanced assessment of these issues

could have produced a more thorough and balanced view of Russia's chances on the continent. Nonetheless, the book closes a significant vacuum in the literature and improves readers' comprehension of Russia's activities in Africa. Scholars interested in Russian foreign policy, and African affairs, graduate students, and international relations scholars would find the book helpful.

Endnotes

1. Folashadé Soulé, "Africa+1' Summit Diplomacy and the 'New Scramble' Narrative: Recentering African Agency," *African Affairs*, Vol. 119, No. 477 (October 2020), pp. 633-646.

China's Rise in the Global South: The Middle East, Africa, and Beijing's Alternative World Order

By Dawn C. Murphy

Stanford University Press, 2022, 408 pages, \$85.00, ISBN: 9781503630093

Reviewed by Esra Sarioğlu, Shanghai University

Following China's emergence as a critical actor on the international stage in recent years, there has been a sharp increase in scholarly research and interest in numerous Chinese-related topics. While most studies have focused on China's rise and its role in world politics, comparisons between the U.S. and China are increasing. Dawn C. Murphy's book differs from previous works by evaluating a different conceptual framework and purpose and proceeding with official documents and interviews.

The book consists of ten chapters. The first three chapters are designed to explain China's foreign policy strategies in the Middle East



and sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, it forms the conceptual and theoretical basis of the book by introducing the analytical approach and talking about the interests and situations that may be threatened. Murphy compares how China shapes its behavior in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa regarding interests and threat perceptions and compares U.S. behavior with the prevailing rules and norms in the liberal international order. This is an essential issue for the creativity of the work. At the same time, this insightful book attempts to contribute to the existing theoretical literature by analyzing China's relations with the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.