

IMAGE OF AFRICA

IN THE MIRROR OF THINK TANKS
AROUND THE GLOBE



Chapter from Africa 2025: Prospects and Challenges
Handbook by the HSE University Center for African Studies
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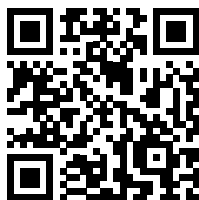
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The chapter **Image of Africa in the mirror of think tanks around the globe** considers opinion and assessment of cooperation with Africa by experts from all over the world. This chapter relies on a qualitative analysis of more than 300 articles that were published by think tanks in 2024 and the second half of 2023. The author calculates an 'attention index' to Africa relative to other regions and analyse how Africa is viewed within frameworks like 'Africa as a source of risks vs. a source of opportunities', 'security vs. economy', and 'humanitarian projects vs. trade and business'. The chapter serves as an integral part of the handbook *Africa 2025: Prospects and Challenges* prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

Africa 2025: Prospects and Challenges is to serve as a handbook on Africa's development, challenges and prospects. Its target audience is government officials, businessmen, scholars and experts. The handbook aims to provide alternative positive vision on some issues that Africa faces, among them being the fight for food and energy sovereignty, debt crisis, digital transformation, rapid urbanisation and population growth.

The book was prepared by the team of experts and scholars coordinated by HSE University Center for African Studies (Moscow, Russia).

Digital version
of the Handbook
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Image of Africa in the mirror of think tanks around the globe

How do think tanks around the globe perceive Africa?

We define a **think tank** as “an institute, corporation or group organised for interdisciplinary research with the objective of providing advice on a diverse range of policy issues and products through the use of specialised knowledge and the activation of networks”¹.

Think tanks serve as both objects of analysis and important political actors in the system of international relations. On the one hand, think tanks create narratives about Africa based on ideas that dominate among political and economic elites. On the other hand, an analysis of think tanks publications allows us to identify the main attitudes that ruling elites, the private sector and NGOs, relying on the expertise of intellectuals, follow when taking decisions interacting with African countries. Thus, they simultaneously influence the political processes.

This chapter relies on a **qualitative analysis of articles that were published by think tanks in 2024 and the second half of 2023** (although in some cases the analysis period was somewhat extended due to lack of information) and also mentioned the word ‘Africa’ in the title or text. Our survey covered more than 300 publications.

The sample was stratified by ‘global poles’. Thus, we surveyed publications of think tanks registered in the **United States, Europe, China, India** and **Russia**. For each global pole, five think tanks were selected. When forming the sample, we relied on data from the **Global Go To Think Tank Index Report** of the University of Pennsylvania, the latest version of which was published in 2020². The index authors catalogued 11,175 think tanks around the

Think tanks sample

China

Institute of International and Strategic Studies Peking University
Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
China Institute for International Studies
Center for China and Globalization
China Center for International Economic Exchanges

Europe

Chatham House (UK)¹
Bruegel (Belgium)
Clingendael Institute (Netherlands)
IFRI (France)
Elcano Institute (Spain)

Russia

Russian International Affairs Council
Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations
Russia in Global Affairs
Moscow State Institute of International Relations
Valdai Discussion Club

US

Brookings Institution
Peterson Institute for International Economics
Center for Strategic and International Studies¹
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace^{1,2}
The Heritage Foundation

India

Observer Research Foundation
Delhi Policy Group
Center for Policy Research
Gateway House
The Hindu Center

¹Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Chatham House are recognized as undesirable organizations in the Russian Federation by the decision of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office.

²Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is included in the register of NGOs performing the functions of a foreign agent by decision of the Ministry of Justice of Russia.

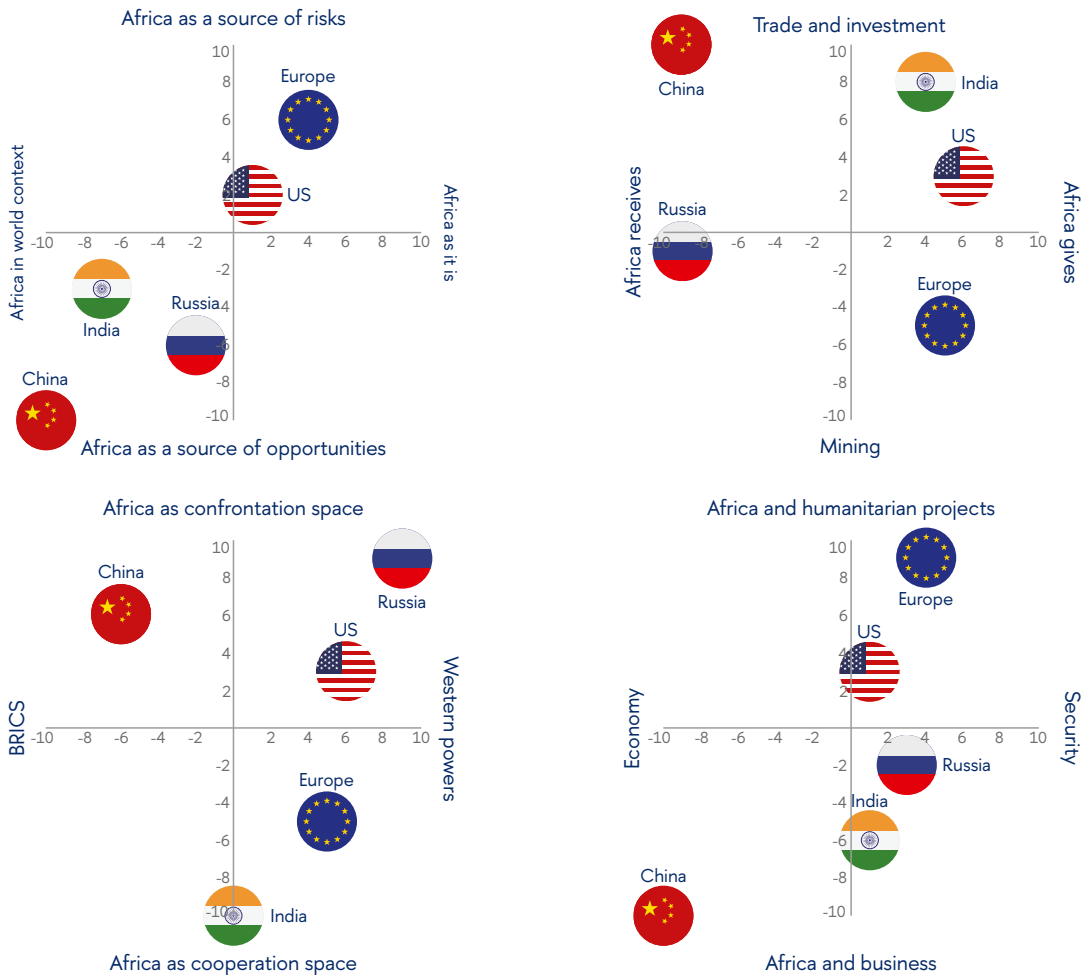
Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

world. For each global pole, we selected the top five think tanks based on their position in the ranking.

Unfortunately, a couple of times we had to abandon this strict scheme of sampling for methodological reasons. Firstly, in some cases the top five included think tanks that either focused on too specific matters (Urban Institute, USA) or did not cover Africa in their publications during the period under review (several think tanks from the top five for India). Secondly, due to technical limitations, we considered publications only in English, Russian and French.

1 Britannica. Think Tank. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/think-tank>

2 James G. McGann. 2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report. URL: <https://www.bruegel.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020-Global-Go-To-Think-Tank-Index-Report-Bruegel.pdf>



The scales are formed on the basis of normalisation with base 10 of the difference in frequencies of occurrence of items belonging to one or the other pole

The sample includes materials for the years 2023 and 2024

Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

For this reason, we had to exclude some of the top five Chinese think tanks, since they publish their materials only in Chinese. Thirdly, the Russian think tank market has undergone significant changes in recent years, so only in this case centres for analysis were selected based on the authors' expertise.

We have reflected the metanarratives inherent in the think tanks of each of the poles on two-dimensional spaces.

Europe, to a much greater extent than other regions of the world, views Africa as a source of risks. The US shares almost the same attitude

The discourse of risks is almost completely absent in the publications of Chinese think tanks. They perceive Africa as a space of opportunities which is almost the same case with Russia, while India sticks to a more balanced approach. At the same time, Europe and the US to a much greater extent tend to view Africa as it is, without references to the relations between 'global players'.

China views Africa almost exclusively in a global context

While Russia occupies a middle position and India is located between them.

India, Europe and especially China are interested in Africa as a promising partner for trade and investment

The US sees Africa as a storehouse of natural resources, and Russia is quite balanced in this issue, striving for all forms of cooperation.

Moreover, Russia and China occupy the extreme position in terms of 'Africa receives – Africa gives'. On this scale, the extent to which national think tanks write about what the continent can give to the outside world is reflected as well as to what extent they are focused on what it can get from it. Experts from Russia and China focus mainly only on questions about what they can give to Africa, keeping silent about what they can receive in return. India and, somewhat more clearly, the US, on the contrary, mostly write about what Africa can offer to them and other countries. Europe is located in the middle, but somewhat gravitates towards 'Africa receives'.

In terms of 'cooperation-confrontation' logic India clearly assesses the continent as a room for cooperation among all interested parties, Russians experts almost always pursue the narrative of Africa as a space for

the confrontation between foreign powers, which may be explained by the fact that right now this country faces strong pressure from the US and Europe in terms of economic and financial sanctions all around the globe as well as attempts to prevent governments of the developing world from cooperation with it. The US and, especially, China are also closer to the confrontational pole.

Europe generally shares the views of Indian experts, trying to push the decision-makers towards the reassessment of its current policy on the continent.

It is also noteworthy that Russia writes about the interests of Western countries in Africa more often than about BRICS countries interests in Africa. China, on the contrary, pays somewhat more attention to BRICS, focusing mostly on the role of South Africa in the club as well as prospects for the inclusion of some new African countries, while India maintains a balanced position, and Europe and the US are more interested in their own prospects.

Finally, there is a slight bias in all poles towards discussing Africa in economic rather than security terms. For example, China almost does not touch on security (at least in English-language materials).

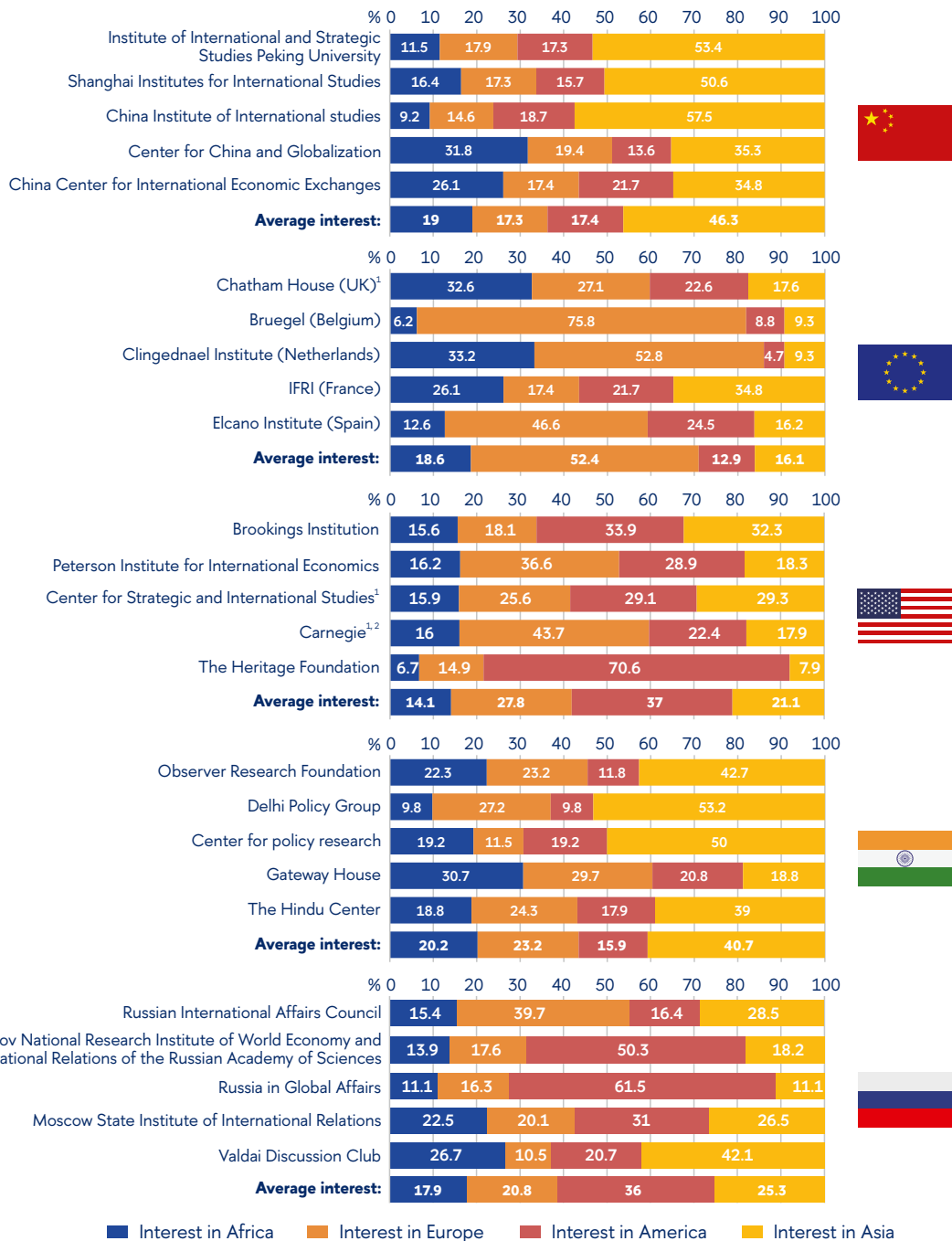
In addition, Europe is much more likely than others to talk about humanitarian issues on the continent, and the US is also focused on this rather than the business pole.

Methodological note on think tanks interest in Africa

If the website's built-in search engine allowed a time limit for searching, we entered the search query and either counted the articles manually or copied the number representing the quantity of target articles. Otherwise, the results were arranged chronologically and then counted manually.

However, the sheer number of articles mentioning Africa does not tell us anything about the extent of a think tank's interest in the continent. To avoid this problem, three comparative categories were added to the analysis: the number of articles mentioning the words 'Europe', 'America' and 'Asia'. So, for each think tank, we came up with the four values, which were then converted into percentages of the total number of articles mentioning any of the keywords. In addition to calculating the shares for each think tank, the average level of interest in Africa, Asia, America and Europe across the five global poles was also calculated.

Think tanks interest towards different regions



¹Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Chatham House are recognized as undesirable organizations in the Russian Federation by the decision of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office.

²Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is included in the register of NGOs performing the functions of a foreign agent by decision of the Ministry of Justice of Russia.

Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

Russia and India are much more balanced, although they tend towards the 'Africa and business' extreme. China overwhelmingly discusses only business.

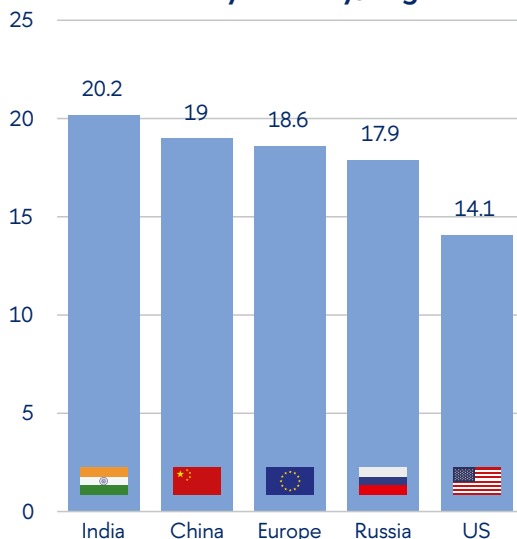
Russia and Europe are slightly more biased towards security than the others

In addition to meta-narratives, one may also assess each think tank's interest in Africa by counting the number of articles mentioning the keyword 'Africa'. We did this for the period from August 2023 to September 2024: the raw numbers were later transformed into the shares indicating the think tanks' interest in different world regions. Finally, the average interest towards Africa for each global pole was calculated.

China's interest in different geographic regions outside of Asia is almost perfectly balanced. The level of interest of local think tanks in Africa is 19, roughly the same for Europe (17.3) and the Americas (17.4).

For European think tanks, Africa is the second priority destination after the Europe itself: on average, 18.6 out of all articles mention Africa, followed closely by Asia (16.1), while the interest in the Americas is significantly lower (12.9).

Average think tanks interest in Africa by country/region



Share of articles dedicated to Africa.

The sample includes materials for the years 2023 and 2024

Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

The United States think tanks are writing relatively rarely about their home region, the Americas (37). Interest in Europe is only 9 percentage points lower, at 27.8. Moreover, for US think tanks, Asia is a higher priority than Africa: 21.1 interest points versus 14.1.

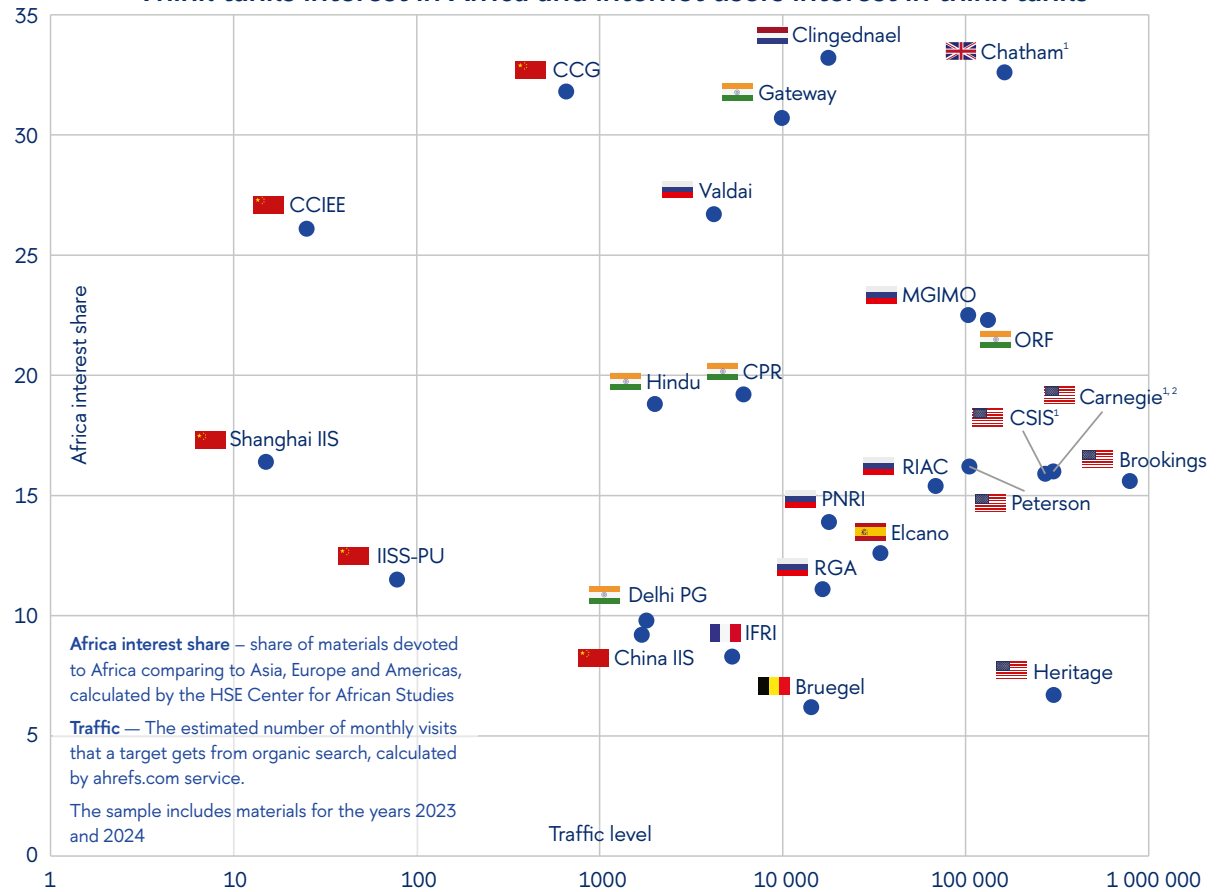
As our meta-narrative analysis suggested, **Indian think tanks show the strongest interest in Africa**, at 20.2. This is still lower than the think tanks' interest in Europe (23.2), but significantly higher than in America (15.9). Russia shows the most interest in America (36), followed by Europe (25.3), Asia (20.8) and Africa (17.9).

If we compare the interest in Africa across the global poles, India will occupy the first place with an index of 20.2, followed by China with 19. Europe shows slightly less interest with a figure of 18.6, Russia is quite close with 17.9. The US comes in last with 14.1. However, all the values for each of the global poles are relatively close to each other. Therefore, the main takeaway from this study may be that by 2024, all global players – without exception – have realised the importance of studying Africa.

At the think tank level most involved in studying Africa in the sample is the **Dutch Clingendael Institute**, closely followed by the **Center for China and Globalization**, and the Indian **Gateway House**. The top also includes one Russian think tank, **the Valdai Discussion Club**, with a score of 26.7. Notably, there is not a single American think tank among the centres most interested in Africa. However, almost all of them are located in the middle of the ranking. Among the institutes least interested in Africa, one can find the **China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)**, Indian **Delhi Policy Group**, **Russia in Global Affairs**, **Institute of International and Strategic Studies of Peking University (IISS)** and Spanish **Elcano Royal Institute**.

Calculating the average interest of think tanks in different regions around the world shows that Africa is of interest to them overall at 17.96 points out of a possible 100, Europe at 28.3, America at 23.84 and, finally, Asia at 29.9. Given that Africa's current economic and political role in the world is much lower, this interest can be considered extremely high and linked to projections of the continent's growing role in world politics.

Think tanks interest in Africa and internet users interest in think tanks



CCG	Center for China and Globalization
CCIEE	China Center for International Economic Exchanges
Shanghai IIS	Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
IISS-PU	Institute of International and Strategic Studies Peking University
Delhi PG	Delhi Policy Group
China IIS	China Institute of International studies
Clingednael	Clingednael Institute
Chatham	Chatham House ¹
Gateway	Gateway House
Valdai	Valdai Discussion Club
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Relations
ORF	Observer Research Foundation

Hindu	Hindu Center
CPR	Center for Policy Research
IFRI	Institut français des relations internationales
Bruegel	Bruegel
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies ¹
Carnegie	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace ^{1,2}
Brookings	Brookings Institution
PNRI	Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations
RIAC	Russian International Affairs Council
Peterson	Peterson Institute for International Economics
Elcano	Elcano Institute
RGA	Russia in Global Affairs
Heritage	The Heritage Foundation

¹Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Chatham House are recognized as undesirable organizations in the Russian Federation by the decision of the Russian Prosecutor General's Office.

²Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is included in the register of NGOs performing the functions of a foreign agent by decision of the Ministry of Justice of Russia.

Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

China: business is business, global game is global game

When analysing the image of Africa in the publications of Chinese think tanks, several features inherent to the intellectual centres of this country should be taken into account. Firstly, Chinese think tanks are the most closely intertwined with the state, so their opinion should be considered as a reflection of the attitudes of the state apparatus or one of the many influence groups within the **CPC (Communist Party of China)**. Secondly, analytical groups rarely post English-language publications on their websites, and those that are published should be perceived primarily as a broadcast of China's position for an international, rather than domestic audience. This may create some bias but does not completely exclude the opportunity for analysis.

One of the most prominent narratives present in the discourse of Chinese think tanks is the constant comparison of the Chinese and Western policies in Africa

Thus, it is argued that Chinese loans are more beneficial for the countries of the continent, as Chinese banks primarily focus on promoting the comprehensive development of borrowing countries (i.e. infrastructure development and industrial growth). It is implied that Chinese investments lead to increased productivity and, ultimately, financial returns. At the same time, Western banks and governments are much more focused on financial market conditions (i.e. credit ratings), making them more susceptible to cycles in the global economy and, thus, a less reliable source of financing³. In addition, the political conditionality of US energy and economic programmes is emphasised⁴, and

skepticism is expressed regarding the **US** ability to resolve security problems in Africa – e.g. in the Red Sea⁵. It is acknowledged that the **EU** is actively rethinking its policy in Africa, but so far these efforts are held back by the “**Cold War mentality**”⁶.

It is important to note that criticism of Western approaches does not mean idealising Chinese policy in Africa. For example, there is an open discussion about the shortcomings of loans secured by African natural resources, as fluctuations in commodity prices can complicate loan repayments⁷. Moreover, criticism of external efforts to ensure security on the continent does not mean that China is trying to offer its own approaches.

The topic of China exporting security to Africa is almost completely absent from the analysed publications

There is no doubt that for Chinese think tanks, Africa is an arena of geopolitical competition (but not open confrontation). Analysts mainly talk about this in terms of the **Global South** and the **Global North**.

It is acknowledged that the Global South, of which Africa is a key component, is dissatisfied with the current world order and is ready to make efforts to change it, while China is positioned as the clear leader for developing countries. As for the role of the Global North in this process, think tanks promote two competing narratives in this regard. On the one hand, it is mentioned that the **EU** and the **US** are trying to drive a wedge between the countries of the Global South and compete with the **Belt and Road Initiative** with their own investment and economic programmes. On the other hand, it is mentioned that “Africa is non-Western, but not anti-Western”⁸, which implies the coexistence and even cooperation

3 Xiaoyang Tang, Shuai Pan. Impact of market-based financing on Africa's debt and development. URL: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42533-024-00164-7>

4 Yu Hongyuan. The US is seeking to form an exclusive energy club based on its alliances and partnerships which will impact on the global transition. URL: <https://www.siis.org.cn/sp/15391.jhtml>

5 Jin Liangxiang. U.S. Motives in the Red Sea Go Beyond Bringing Stability. URL: <https://www.siis.org.cn/Commentary/15458.jhtml>

6 Wang Yi. Self-Confidence and Self-Reliance, Openness and Inclusiveness, Fairness and Justice, and Win-Win Cooperation. URL: https://www.ciis.org.cn/gjwtyj/ywqk/202404/t20240407_9217.html

7 Zhou Yuyuan. Does China's oil-for-infrastructure lending model in Africa need a rethink? URL: <https://www.siis.org.cn/Commentary/15613.jhtml>

8 Zhao Minghao. The belt & road initiative and U.S.-China competition over the global South. URL: <http://en.iiss.pku.edu.cn/info/1015/3591.htm>

of various geopolitical poles on the continent. At the same time, Chinese think tanks do not put much focus on the substantive prospects of cooperation with Russia, the US or Europe. Russia is mentioned only in the context of BRICS as one of its core members.

To a much greater extent than all other global poles, China is focused on cooperation with African countries within the framework of international institutions and agreements

Many analytical materials are devoted to the potential expansion of **BRICS** and the role of the organisation in the continent's development. It is emphasised that African countries and BRICS share a common historical experience, as well as the fact that this organisation can play an important role in strengthening the continent's voice in the international arena⁹.

The G7 is perceived as an association competing with BRICS for influence in the Global South. In addition, attention is paid to the **G77** (China sees itself as the leader of this group¹⁰), as well as the African Union. Chinese think tanks express hope that China can benefit from the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** and also call for considering the possibility of a **China-Africa Continental Free Trade Area, CAFTA**¹¹.

Chinese intellectuals are quite transparent in defining the country's national interests on the continent: trade and sales of Chinese goods. However, the situation with the Belt and Road Initiative seems a little more ambiguous. Think tanks pay great attention to describing the benefits that Africa can gain from cooperation within the framework of this initiative, but do not describe at all how this programme will enrich China itself. In addition, economic plans noticeably prevail over descriptions of humanitarian projects, although think tanks also write about sharing experiences

in public administration, fighting poverty, and talent management.

Last but not least, Chinese think tanks are characterised by their attention to the continent in the context of world politics and the interests of the great powers, but events within the continent itself seem to remain terra incognita for analysts: it is difficult to find publications that would describe the internal politics, conflicts or economic changes within a single African country. It is highly likely that in the Chinese intellectual context, materials of this kind are treated as impolite and colonial-looking. Therefore, Chinese experts try to avoid the discussion of African domestic affairs in public.

China prefers to present Africa in a long-term macro perspective, without going into the details of current events

EU and UK: we failed, but we will become better

In 2024, European think tanks were most focused on rethinking Western policies in Africa, this process has been going on in Europe since decolonisation and seems to be never-ending. First of all, the trigger for this new wave of interest towards rethinking European approaches were recent developments in the Sahel region.

The unexpectedness of this turnaround is emphasised, as is the inability of the **EU** and the **United States** to quickly find common grounds with new rulers of Sahel countries¹². **France** is recognised as the main 'loser' in this context. Despite the fact that the think tanks represent various countries (**Spain, Belgium, Great Britain, France, the Netherlands**), most authors share the idea that the era of unconditional dominance of the West

9 Haibin Niu. A Greater Voice for Developing Countries. URL: <https://www.sis.org.cn/Commentary/15108.jhtml>

10 Yuan Sha. G77+China to Play a Bigger Role in the Global South Agenda. URL: https://www.ciis.org.cn/english/COMMENTARIES/202309/t20230918_9072.html

11 Zhuo Li. Prospects for China-Africa continental free trade area (CAFTA). URL: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42533-023-00148-z>

12 IFRI. After the Failure in the Sahel, Rethinking French Policy in Africa. URL: <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/briefings-de-ifri/after-failure-sahel-rethinking-french-policy-africa>

on the continent is firmly in the past: **“external actors – and in particular Western governments – have consistently overestimated their ability to influence and effect real change in the region and have to become more modest in their objectives”**¹³. This is complemented by a discussion about how the number of international actors active in Africa, as well as their interest in expanding their presence in the region, has increased.

Some authors note that the developing countries often view the EU as “self-serving, hypocritical and postcolonial”¹⁴. It is also acknowledged that, in seeking to resolve conflicts on the continent, Western governments have often made deals with elites that have not benefited citizens. Typically, such arguments end with calls for the recognition of greater African agency as well as for more flexible and people-centered strategies for engagement on the continent.

External actors operating in Africa are most often described in terms of competition rather than conflict

However, there are notable exceptions. **Spanish think tank Elcano** notes that the Global South is a battleground between the West on the one side and China and Russia on the other, positioning Spain as a possible vanguard of this clash¹⁵. Another intriguing implication of the **Global South and Global North** division for European analysts is that the two groups of countries have competing interests in the global economic system: the South’s growth model is built on the sale of resources, while the North is increasingly focused on the export of technology. Finally, if the reference country for **China** is the **United States**, then European think tanks, in turn, are concerned about comparing European policies with

Chinese ones. A competitive advantage for Europe is that trade with it is more balanced and surplus for Africa, in addition, Europe is still able to provide more direct investments on the continent¹⁶. Much attention is paid to the **Belt and Road Initiative**. Experts urge a more sober look at its prospects and learn to separate the promises of Chinese from real actions. According to their assessment, the image of the initiative in Africa is still positive, but a trend of some decline is recorded¹⁷.

A significant place in the discourse of European think tanks is occupied by the risks of collective security

It is considered both within Africa and beyond. Thus, experts discuss Africa’s contribution to the fight against climate change and note the existence of an almost insoluble conflict between the goal of transition to renewable energy and achieving universal electricity access. According to them, since African countries are primarily concerned with ensuring energy security at any cost, it would be too bold to place hopes on them to limit the use of fossil fuels in the short run¹⁸. In addition, much attention is paid to conflicts and tensions in countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya, Mali and Nigeria, which threaten both regional stability and can lead to an increase in the influx of refugees into the countries of the Global North. The transfer of power under military control in the Sahel countries is also perceived as an unambiguous threat.

Among all the global poles examined, Europe most often discusses Africa in the context of humanitarian issues. Think tanks analyse human trafficking on the

13 Clingendael. Stabilisation and the Central Sahel. URL: <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/stabilisation-and-central-sahel>

14 ELCANO. Europe and the Global South. How to gain influence and credibility in a complex world. URL: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/europe-and-the-global-south-how-to-gain-influence-and-credibility-in-a-complex-world/>

15 ELCANO. Spearhead?: Spain, Europe and the battle for the global South. URL: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/policy-paper/spearhead-spain-europe-and-the-battle-for-the-global-south/>

16 Bruegel. While Africa’s economic relations with China are hyped, its relationship with the EU is more favourable. URL: <https://www.bruegel.org/newsletter/while-africas-economic-relations-china-are-hyped-its-relationship-eu-more-favourable>

17 Bruegel. Global trends in countries’ perceptions of the Belt and Road Initiative. URL: <https://www.bruegel.org/working-paper/global-trends-countries-perceptions-belt-and-road-initiative>

18 ELCANO. The geopolitics of the global energy demand shift. URL: <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/the-geopolitics-of-the-global-energy-demand-shift/>

continent, smuggling¹⁹, drug addiction²⁰, food and water security and gender equality²¹. Consideration is being given to which resources the EU already offers to the continent and can provide in the future to resolve these difficulties. Local government institutions also attract the attention of think tanks.

As expected, formal democratic institutions such as transparent and fair elections as well as independent judiciary have a high importance for European intellectuals. Perhaps, compared to the other poles, Europe pays the most attention to monitoring the continent's election campaigns.

To sum up, European think tanks are concerned about reshaping the African policies of European countries and insist on the need to acknowledge the mistakes of the past. Much attention is paid to humanitarian issues, and the continent is often being considered as a source of risks for itself and the surrounding world. It is assumed that the work on eliminating these risks is the responsibility of mankind in general. China appears to be the main competitor in the issue of economic policy, but the standard assumption among think tanks is the threat it poses to European interests may be exaggerated.

India: cooperation matters

India is perhaps the only case in which intellectuals are ready to admit that Africa not only needs foreign assistance and experience, but is also capable of bringing useful insights to external players

Indian think tanks are the most ardent supporters of non-aligned values and call for a balanced international policy for Africa. Analysts consider this a true sign of sovereignty of the continent: "it is time for African leaders to show their agency and avoid taking sides"²². Moreover, India is perhaps the only case in which intellectuals are ready to admit that Africa not only needs foreign assistance and experience, but is also capable of bringing useful insights to external players: "partnership between India and Africa should be a two-way street"²³. For think tanks, African experience in addressing the issue of slum growth²⁴ and ensuring the rule of law (in the case of South Africa) is important²⁵. India places a strong emphasis on cooperation rather than confrontation. Experts say their country aims to move towards a multipolar but peaceful world order, calling for **BRICS**, for example, to be a platform for balanced dialogue rather than an anti-Western bloc²⁶. There are also many analysts who advocate fruitful cooperation between the West and the Global South²⁷.

Despite the generally peaceful discourse, **China's** policy in Africa has left some authors openly irritated. One analyst recalls **Xi Jinping** bragging about Beijing's "non-interference" in African affairs, and then shows that this statement is far from the truth²⁸. However, other publications that mention China generally provide a balanced and neutral analysis of economic developments on the continent, primarily the **Belt and Road Initiative**²⁹. The largely neutral tone does not prevent Indian experts from analysing current conflicts that affect the continent.

19 Clingendael. Niger's Repeal of the 2015/36 Anti-Smuggling Law. URL: <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/nigers-repeal-201536-anti-smuggling-law>

20 Clingendael. Deadly drug Kush haunts West Africa. URL: <https://www.clingendael.org/news/deadly-drug-kush-haunts-west-africa>

21 Clingendael. Young South Sudanese Women as Community Change Agents. URL: <https://www.clingendael.org/news/young-south-sudanese-women-community-change-agents>

22 ORF. G7's African pivot: Energy, migration, and beyond. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/g7-s-african-pivot-energy-migration-and-beyond>

23 ORF. India-Africa education partnership holds the key to a prosperous future. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-africa-education-partnership-holds-the-key-to-a-prosperous-future>

24 CPR India. The Politics of Slums in the Global South: Urban Informality in Brazil, India, South Africa and Peru. URL: <https://cprindia.org/books/the-politics-of-slums-in-the-global-south-urban-informality-in-brazil-india-south-africa-and-peru/>

25 Hindy Centre. Citizens and the State: Policing, Impunity, and the Rule of Law in India. URL: <https://www.thehinducentre.com/incoming/citizens-and-the-state-policing-impunity-and-the-rule-of-law-in-india/article67887312.ece>

26 ORF. How does an expanded BRICS benefit India? URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/how-does-an-expanded-brics-benefit-india>

27 Gateway House. West must listen to emerging middle powers. URL: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/west-must-listen-to-emerging-middle-powers/>

28 ORF. China's conflict resolution mechanism in Africa: Mediation with Chinese characteristics. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/china-s-conflict-resolution-mechanism-in-africa-mediation-with-chinese-characteristics>

29 ORF. Shrinking Chinese demand, loan volumes weaken Africa's growth prospects. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/shrinking-chinese-demand-loan-volumes-weakens-africa-s-growth-prospects>

Thus, the ORF research center predicts an inevitable clash of interests between the **UAE** and **Saudi Arabia** in Africa³⁰, and the **Delhi Policy Group** analyses the consequences of the **Ukrainian crisis** and problems with grain supplies for Russia's image among African countries³¹. Moreover, Indian think tanks are joining the chorus of voices noting the failures of French and US policies in Sahel, and the withdrawal of some states from ECOWAS is being called the **"West African Brexit"**³².

Unlike China, which clearly claims to be the leader of the Global South, India rather positions itself as a lobbyist for the countries of the Global South. For example, Indian analysts credit their country with establishing the position of the **African Union** as permanent member of the **G20**³³. The country is said to be committed to the ideas of pluralism and advocacy of the interests of the South at international level, ready to defend peace, prosperity and sustainability.

One of India's key competitive advantages on the continent appears to be its ability to supply cheap medicines and share health expertise with African countries. According to experts at the Delhi Policy Group, the supply of millions of vaccine doses during the pandemic has allowed India to confirm its status as a global power³⁴. Another point of pride is the systems for measuring the competency of healthcare providers that are now being used in 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa³⁵. However, humanitarian projects remain much less important for India than the prospects for trade with African countries, which are discussed much more often.

Indian think tanks rarely talk about the domestic politics of African countries, but a notable exception

to this rule is **South Africa**, whose recent elections have attracted much attention³⁶. Among external players that do not claim the status of a 'global power centre', the actions of **Italy** and **Japan** in Africa are mentioned.

Indian think tanks are broadcasting one of the more balanced views of Africa of the present and future

From their point of view, the continent, whose importance for international politics has grown dramatically in recent years, should become a platform for cooperation of all interested forces. African countries themselves are being pushed towards non-alignment and balancing between various centres of power. These efforts can be supported by India as a lobbyist for the interests of the Global South and a link between them and the West.

US: minerals, national security and humanitarian aid

In the context of the upcoming presidential elections, it is noteworthy how Africa is viewed by **Republican-leaning** and **Democratic-leaning** US think tanks. Experts from the conservative **Heritage Foundation** are convinced that the US should reconsider its policy towards the continent: it is argued that despite large-scale financial aid to African countries, most of them remain poor and demonstrate low rates of economic growth. The authors of the Republican think tank suggest focusing on trade and investment rather than direct aid³⁷. In addition, in their view, the United States should refuse to cooperate with countries that do not support its foreign policy.

30 ORF. UAE and Saudi Arabia's agricultural diplomacy in Africa: Competition, cooperation and its strategic implications. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/uae-and-saudi-arabia-s-agricultural-diplomacy-in-africa-competition-cooperation-and-its-strategic-implications>

31 Delhi Policy Group. Global Horizons. URL: <https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/global-horizons/global-horizons-4945.html>

32 ORF. The Alliance of Sahel States: A regional crisis in troubled West Africa. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-alliance-of-sahel-states-a-regional-crisis-in-troubled-west-africa>

33 Gateway House. India's G20 Presidency: Furthering India-Africa Ties. URL: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/events/indias-g20-presidency-furthering-india-africa-ties/>

34 Delhi Policy Group. East Asia Explorer. URL: <https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/east-asia-explorer/east-asia-explorer-4932.html>

35 CPR India. Policy in Action- Health. URL: <https://cprindia.org/policy-in-action-health/>

36 Gateway House. South Africa goes to the polls. URL: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/south-africa-goes-polls/>

37 Heritage. Africa in Focus: Shifting the Paradigm Together. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/africa-focus-shifting-the-paradigm-together>

First of all, this concerns **South Africa**: “Pretoria supported Gaddafi, Castro and Mugabe; sold weapons to al-Assad and Putin; is now forming alliances with China, Iran, and Russia; and supports Hamas”³⁸. Responsibility for the failure of US policy in Sahel is placed on the administration of Joseph Biden³⁹. Thus, if Donald Trump wins the election, the likelihood of the United States reducing direct financial and humanitarian aid to Africa, as well as reconsidering long-term alliances on the continent, increases.

Democratic think tanks, citing increased activity in Africa by China and Russia, are discussing the possibilities of strengthening the position of **NATO** there. Although the importance of the continent for the future of the alliance is not in question, some experts urge caution in this regard: it is acknowledged that for young Africans NATO is associated with outdated colonial and post-colonial systems. In general, US think tanks share the sentiments of their European colleagues regarding the fact that residents of many African countries are disappointed in ‘democracy’ and cooperation with the West. It is noted that the real winners of formal democratisation have often been the ruling elites, and many citizens have not seen any of the widely advertised benefits of democracy⁴⁰.

It is predicted that in the near future, the US government will be faced with difficult trade-offs: to adhere to its obligations to protect democracy, which means refusing to cooperate with regimes that have gained power non-electorally, or to accommodate these regimes to a certain extent, maintaining strategic and economic access to the continent, but violating the declared principles of foreign policy⁴¹. However, the same authors predict

that military governments or political leaders who violate constitutional restrictions on holding office will most likely also be unable to solve the structural problems of their countries, which will open a new window of opportunity for democratisation.

Electoral democracy is still unambiguously linked by the US think tanks to economic growth. African countries are supposed to prosper only by holding regular, transparent elections, although the experts very rarely try to substantively explain this connection or simply neglect the necessity of doing so⁴²

The US discourse clearly expresses a narrative about Africa as an arena of competition between the United States and **China**⁴³ and, to a much lesser extent, **Russia**. China is positioned as a potential economic hegemon of the continent. The United States do not differ from the think tanks of other poles of power in recognising the subjectivity of the Global South, as well as the fact that the new multipolar geopolitical reality requires the formation of a new approach to this group of countries.

There is a call for a more restrained attitude towards the fact that many developing countries refuse to openly condemn Russia’s foreign policy. For example, discussing nuclear weapons, experts agree that the leaders of the Global South may be frightened by nuclear weapons as such, and not by the countries that possess them and could potentially use them. In addition to Russia and China, considerable attention is also being paid to other players, such as **Türkiye** and **Japan**. Several publications focus on the presence of the **Gulf states**, the **UAE**, **Qatar** and **Saudi Arabia** on the continent. Experts claim that Washington sees these countries as a natural counterweight to Russia and

38 Heritage. Time to Cut U.S. Foreign Aid to South Africa. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/time-cut-us-foreign-aid-south-africa>

39 Heritage. Niger Coup Raises Questions About U.S. Sahel Strategy. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/niger-coup-raises-questions-about-us-sahel-strategy>

40 Brookings. How African governments can regain the trust of their citizens. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-african-governments-can-regain-the-trust-of-their-citizens/>

41 Brookings. Addressing and preventing coups in Africa: What the United States can do. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/addressing-and-preventing-coups-in-africa-what-the-united-states-can-do/>

42 Brookings. Africa’s prosperity tied to investing in democracy. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/africas-prosperity-tied-to-investing-in-democracy/>

43 China Global South. Africa is at the Center of U.S.-China Competition for Critical Resources. URL: <https://chinaglobalsouth.com/podcasts/africa-is-at-the-center-of-u-s-china-competition-for-critical-resources> Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE).

Who Are China’s Fellow Travelers in the International System? URL: <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2024/who-are-chinas-fellow-travelers-international-system>

China, but increased tolerance for their activity could also weaken the continent's drive for democracy⁴⁴.

Beyond geopolitics and trade, analysts view US national interests in Africa as mitigating security risks, maintaining supply chains for minerals and supporting the continent in resolving humanitarian issues. It is telling that the issue of US exports to Africa is virtually absent from public analyses.

In the context of security threats, analysts may mention the activity of non-state actors⁴⁵, including terrorists, piracy⁴⁶ and the transfer of power to non-legitimate politicians.

Compared to other global poles the US are most concerned about the extraction of critical minerals in Africa⁴⁷

This is justified by the shortage of critical minerals for the production of semiconductors and renewable energy. For example, one text analyses the prospects for cooperation with **Madagascar, Mozambique** and **Tanzania** in the area of graphite extraction. At the moment, China appears to be far ahead in the global race to build supply chains for cobalt, rare earth metals, lithium and a number of other important metals and minerals, although mining companies from Europe and US have a large presence in precious metals and gemstones in many African countries. As for the humanitarian dimension of US national interests in Africa, it should be noted that issues of food security⁴⁸ and the development of local

education systems⁴⁹ occupy an important place in it.

Another distinctive feature of the intellectual debate about Africa in the United States is the increased attention to energy security and climate change. Experts point out that African countries are the most vulnerable to extreme weather conditions and climate change, although they are relatively little responsible for these problems. Much attention is drawn to the lack of stable access to energy in most African countries. These difficulties are proposed to be addressed through the development of hydropower, the exploitation of alternative energy sources⁵⁰ and a more equitable distribution of financial assistance from the United States.

Because of the high level of competition for attention and resources between think tanks in the US, the perception of Africa in this case is distinguished by the greatest diversity of topics covered and views on the future of Africa, which are difficult to distill into coherent semantic blocks. Think tanks pay attention even to such issues that are not directly related to US interests as the use of digital currencies by African banks⁵¹, local self-governance⁵², cybersecurity⁵³ and gender equality⁵⁴.

Although the US, like **Europe**, acknowledges the imperfection of many of its decisions regarding the continent and the significant change in the balance of power in the world, experts express hope that their country will continue to work actively in Africa.

44 Time. Gulf Investment Boom in Africa. URL: <https://time.com/6975593/gulf-investment-boom-afric>

45 Brookings Institution. Nonstate Armed Actors in 2024: The Middle East and Africa. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/nonstate-armed-actors-in-2024-the-middle-east-and-africa>

46 Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). Beware Pirates: Challenges to Shipping Today. URL: <https://www.piie.com/events/2024/beware-pirates-challenges-shipping-today>

47 Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). Political Unrest in Africa Threatens Global Critical Mineral Supplies. URL: <https://www.piie.com/research/piie-charts/2023/political-unrest-africa-threatens-global-critical-mineral-supplies-and>

48 Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE). Food Insecurity: What Can the World Trading System Do About It? URL: <https://www.piie.com/publications/policy-briefs/food-insecurity-what-can-world-trading-system-do-about-it>

49 Brookings Institution. New Trends in Africa-Asia Economic Relations. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-trends-in-africa-asia-economic-relations>

50 Brookings Institution. Championing Green Energy in Africa: A Strategy for Quick Wins. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/championing-green-energy-in-africa-a-strategy-for-quick-wins>

51 Brookings Institution. Should African Central Banks Pursue Digital Currencies? URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/should-african-central-banks-pursue-digital-currencies>

52 Brookings Institution. Subnational Democracy and Local Governance in Africa. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/subnational-democracy-and-local-governance-in-africa>

53 Brookings Institution. Subnational Democracy and Local Governance in Africa. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/subnational-democracy-and-local-governance-in-africa>

54 Brookings Institution. Promoting Gender Equality in Africa Through Gender-Responsive Procurement. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/promoting-gender-equality-in-africa-through-gender-responsive-procurement>

From their point of view, the continental security system, humanitarian projects, trade, infrastructure, investment and energy of the continent are too dependent on support from the US and indivisible from this country, and Africa, in turn, is a source of critical minerals and one of the future drivers of global economic growth, which makes cooperation with the West inevitable.

Russia: we are so back

According to Russian experts, many African states have made important steps towards real sovereignty and liberation from neo-colonial practices in recent years⁵⁵. Russia appears to be an exporter of sovereignty⁵⁶, supporting governments pursuing independent policies. In addition to sovereignty, Russia is willing to offer assistance in the fight against terrorism⁵⁷ on the continent. Because Russian military presence has increased most in Sahel in recent years, this region of Africa is the most frequently mentioned in articles.

Russia's advantage over other players on this issue is justified by the fact that it does not make political demands in exchange for aid, as is often the case with Western countries⁵⁸

Being able to rely on the thesis "Russia is the only white power that has never colonised anyone in Africa"⁵⁹, which is almost omnipresent in Africa (at least in the 35+ years old generations), makes this

position seem winnable. Russian intellectuals agree that cooperation with Africa should not be limited to security issues: "Given the growing interest of African countries in full-scale co-operation, Russia needs to focus on strengthening not only its military-political but also its financial-industrial positions"⁶⁰. This process is still at an early stage: it is noted that only a very limited number of joint projects have been implemented between the 2019 and 2023 Russia-Africa summits⁶¹. Nevertheless, the presence of the "Made in Russia" brand on the continent, as claimed by the experts, is slowly but surely growing⁶².

From a geopolitical point of view, think tanks are trying to overcome some ambiguity arising from numerous social, economic and cultural differences between Russia and African countries. Russia, on the one hand, is attributed to the 'global majority' and the Global South, on the other, it is the bearer of the 'real' (traditional in terms of last couple of centuries) European values, which are no longer characteristic of modern Europe⁶³. **China**

in this new geopolitical reality is seen as a natural counterweight used by African countries to gain more autonomy from **Europe** and the **US**⁶⁴. Western countries themselves, in turn, are portrayed as desperately clinging

to their status as the continent's dominant powers. Some experts regard terrorist activity or protests as Western-inspired actions to maintain influence⁶⁵. As for Africa itself, the average point of view is that

55 Valdai Club. В Африку бегом. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/chairman-speech/v-afriku-begom/?sphrase_id=752363

56 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Круглый стол РСМД и Института Африки РАН: информационно-культурный суверенитет стран Сахеля в условиях глобализации. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/news/kruglyy-stol-rsmd-i-instituta-afriki-ran-informatsionno-kulturnyy-suverenitet-stran-sakhelya-v-uslov/?sphrase_id=153513930

57 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Блог И. Захарова: Информационная политика в Африке. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/i-zakharov/36491/?sphrase_id=153513930

58 Valdai Club. Благонадёжные партнёры. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/blagonadyeznyye-partnyery/?sphrase_id=752363

59 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Главная задача — вернуть народам Сахеля суверенитет. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/columns/afrika/glavnaya-zadacha-vernut-narodam-sakhelya-suverenitet/?sphrase_id=153513930

60 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). России необходимо укреплять финансовые и производственные позиции в Африке. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/columns/afrika/rossii-neobkhodimo-ukrepyat-finansovye-i-proizvodstvennyye-pozitsii-v-afrike/?sphrase_id=153513930

61 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Африка сейчас уже совсем другая, и мы многому можем у неё поучиться. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/comments/afrika-seychas-uzhe-sovsem-drugaya-i-my-mnogomu-mozhem-u-nee-pouchitsya/?sphrase_id=153513930

62 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Африканская экспансия бренда «Made in Russia» и роль РЭЦ. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/columns/sandbox/afrikanskaya-ekspansiya-brenda-made-in-russia-i-rol-rets/?sphrase_id=153513930

63 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Картина нарождающегося мира: глобальный юг. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/comments/kartina-narozhdayushchegosya-mira-globalnyy-yug/?sphrase_id=153513930

64 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Основные направления сотрудничества КНР со странами Северной Африки. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/osnovnyye-napravleniya-sotrudnichestva-kr-so-stranami-severnoy-afriki/?sphrase_id=153513930

65 Valdai Club. Африканская турбулентность. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/afrikanskaya-turbulentnost/?sphrase_id=752363
Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Главная задача — вернуть народам Сахеля суверенитет. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/columns/afrika/glavnaya-zadacha-vernut-narodam-sakhelya-suverenitet/?sphrase_id=153513930

African countries can become powerful players on the international stage by coordinating their policies and profess values close to **neo-Pan-Africanism**⁶⁶.

In general, the Russian intellectual discussion about Africa can be divided into two large fields. The authors belonging to the first one are emphasising global political factors shaping African affairs. Africa, like the whole world, seems to them to be a large arena of confrontation between **great powers**. On the continent itself, they discover **zones of influence** and determine the most influential regional powers⁶⁷. Thanks to them, Russian think tanks write almost more often about the actions of Western countries in Africa than the European or US think tanks themselves. Most publications of this kind are devoted to **France**: experts note the failure of the **Françafrique** policy⁶⁸, the replacement of France by Russia in Sahel in security matters, and the personal mistakes of Emmanuel Macron⁶⁹. Another topic of experts from this field is neocolonialism politics by the EU and the USA. It is noteworthy that even this category of experts does not imply that China and Russia act as a single coordinated force. If these countries are mentioned together, this happens almost exclusively in the context of cooperation on African issues in BRICS. At the same time, Western think tanks often list China and Russia with a comma, as if they have common goals and a single policy on the continent.

Representatives of the second field focus not on the grand chessboard, but on specific areas of cooperation between Russia and Africa. Their texts are quite technocratic and often lack any geopolitical pathos. Like the US, Russian think tanks pay attention to rare earth elements mined in Africa, also noting **China's** dominance in this area⁷⁰.

Experts consider energy cooperation to be a much more promising idea. They emphasise Russia has unique competencies and is ready to offer almost any services, from personnel training to infrastructure construction

They can help solve the problem of energy deficit on the continent⁷¹. In addition, Russian think tanks write much more about cooperation in the field of education than representatives of other global poles, suggesting that the number of African students in Russian universities can be significantly increased⁷². Two other unique topics mentioned almost exclusively by Russian experts are **digital cooperation**⁷³ and development of the **space industry**⁷⁴. Digitalisation of public administration and everyday life in Africa is seen as one of the ways to overcome inequality⁷⁵ and ensure sovereignty by reducing dependence on Western companies and countries⁷⁶. The Center for African Studies at the Higher School of Economics is doing a strategic project to share experience between Russia and Africa in this area⁷⁷.

While US think tanks are characterised by the greatest diversity of topics discussed in the context

66 Valdai Club. Уроки второго саммита Россия-Африка. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/uroki-vtorogo-sammita-rossiya-afrika/?sphrase_id=752363

67 ИМЭМО РАН. Regional Powers on the African Continent: Trends and Prospects. URL: <https://www.imemo.ru/publications/periodical/meimo/archive/2024/4-t-68/afrika-today-and-tomorrow/regional-powers-on-the-african-continent-trends-and-prospects>

68 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Блог И. Захарова: Информационная политика в Африке. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/i-zakharov/36491/?sphrase_id=153513930

69 ИМЭМО РАН. Francophonie: New Approaches of Emmanuel Macron. URL: <https://www.imemo.ru/publications/periodical/meimo/archive/2024/5-t-68/europe-new-realities/francophonie-new-approaches-of-emmanuel-macron>

70 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Африка на распутье: мировой рынок редкоземельных металлов переживает тектонические сдвиги. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/afrika-na-raspute-mirovoy-rynok-redkozemelnykh-metallov-perezhivaet-tektonicheskie-sdvigi/?sphrase_id=153513930

71 Valdai Club. Россия-Африка: энергетическое сотрудничество. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/rossiya-afrika-energeticheskoe-sotrudnichestvo/?sphrase_id=752363

72 Valdai Club. К вопросу подготовки кадров высшей квалификации. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/k-voprosu-podgotovki-kadrov-vysshey-kvalifikatsii/?sphrase_id=752363

73 Global Affairs. ИТ-экспансия в Африку. URL: <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/it-ekspansiya-v-afriku>

74 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Снится ли им рокот космодрома: заметки о перспективах стран Африки в космосе. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/snitsya-li-im-rokot-kosmodroma-zametki-o-perspektivakh-stran-afriki-v-kosmose/?sphrase_id=153513930

75 Valdai Club. Как Африке преодолеть зависимость. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/kak-afrike-preodolet-zavisimost/?sphrase_id=752363

76 Global Affairs. Цифровизация в Африке. URL: <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/cifrovizaciya-v-afrike>

77 E-Governance Hub. URL: <https://e-governancehub.ru>

of Africa, Russian think tanks are distinguished by the depth of their analysis of domestic political issues on the continent, especially in the area of security⁷⁸. When discussing the conflict in **Libya**⁷⁹ or near the **African Great Lakes**⁸⁰ analysts demonstrate a very high level of awareness of the actors operating in the region and their interests.

Russia is ready to use the rich legacy of ties with the continent left over from the Soviet Union⁸¹, as well as to expand cooperation in new areas. Although the awareness of the need to expand cooperation has only recently emerged, think tanks are confident that it will bring abundant benefits to both sides.

Overall, experts agree that Africa has become one of the top priorities for Russian foreign policy in recent years

Unlike all other think tanks discussed in this text, the HSE University Center for African Studies focuses only on Africa, which allows for a special depth of analysis. In 2023, Center for African Studies published a handbook *Africa 2023: Opportunities and Challenges* in Russian, dedicated to modern-day Africa, its economy, infrastructure, natural resources, security and much more. The book emphasises that Africa is a unique civilisation, which is based on network-centric unity, as well as diverse and flexible social structures. In addition, it is noted that the support for multipolarity in international relations inherent to Russian perception of the world has much in common with the African desire for apolarity as a principle of the fair world order⁸².

In addition, the Center pays special attention to the dynamics of Russia-Africa relations⁸³, noting the breakthroughs that have occurred in recent years in the field of humanitarian cooperation, educational projects, and trade and economic ties. The Russia-Africa summits played an important role in these processes. The experts of the Center for African Studies speak positively about the ability of the overwhelming majority of African countries to maintain neutrality in the Ukrainian crisis despite pressure from the West⁸⁴.

The Center attaches great importance to the knowledge sharing between Russia and Africa. In particular, the Center published a whitepaper report on natural gas industry in Nigeria, where measures to develop the domestic gas market were proposed⁸⁵. In 2023, the Center within the E-Governance Knowledge Sharing Platform launched a handbook *E-Governance in Africa 2024: Opportunities and Challenges*⁸⁶, which became world first comprehensive study of e-governance in Africa.

78 ИМЭМО РАН. Islamist Terrorism in Africa in the 2010-2020s: Main Trends and Prospects. URL: <https://www.imemo.ru/publications/periodical/meimo/archive/2024/4-t-68/africa-today-and-tomorrow/islamist-terrorism-in-africa-in-the-20102020s-main-trends-and-prospects>

79 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Игра в бирюльки на ливийском поле (Часть 3). URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/igra-v-biryulki-na-liviyском-pole-3/?sphrase_id=153513930

80 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Ситуационный анализ РСМД и ИМИ МГИМО: Конфликт в районе Великих Африканских озёр — РВО и позиция России. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/news/situatsionnyy-analiz-rsmd-i-imi-mgimo-konflikt-v-rayone-velikikh-afrikanskikh-ozher-rvo-i-pozitsiya-r/?sphrase_id=153513930

81 Valdai Club. Россия из Африки никуда не уходила. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/rossiya-iz-afriki-nikuda-ne-ukhodila/?sphrase_id=752363

82 Центр изучения Африки НИУ ВШЭ. Африка 2023: Возможности и риски. URL: <https://we.hse.ru/irs/cas/africa2023>

83 НИУ ВШЭ. Африка: перспективы развития и рекомендации для политики России. URL: https://globalaffairs.ru/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/doklad_afrika_perspektivy-razvitiya.pdf

84 Valdai Club. Russia-Africa Cooperation: Outlook and Objectives. URL: <https://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/russia-africa-cooperation-outlook-and-objectives/>

85 HSE University Center for African Studies. NLNG T7: a Way to Euthanize Nigerian Power Sector. URL: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/199kKtlnOpwD7AGLVkKF6LQlrtu94FmX0/preview>

86 HSE University Center for African Studies. E-Governance in Africa 2024: Opportunities and Challenges. URL: <https://e-governancehub.ru/read-book-e-governance-in-africa-2024-challenges-and-opportunities/>

African think tanks

While this chapter focuses primarily on international think tanks views on Africa that are located outside, it would be a shame to ignore the tremendous work being done to understand the continent's future by think tanks based in Africa itself. To do this, we selected all African expert centres from the list of **Top 150 Think Tanks Around the Globe** (non-US) in the **Global Go To Think Tank Index Report 2020** of the University of Pennsylvania⁸⁷. The initial sample included 16 think tanks, but three of them were then excluded due to the lack of a publicly accessible website, one is exclusively engaged in public opinion polls (Afrobarometer), and another five either do not publish online at all or last did it many months ago. The final list of African think tanks included in the sample consists of seven think tanks. Analytical materials selected were published on the websites of these think tanks mostly in August-September 2024, then a qualitative analysis was conducted..

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of African think tanks is their depoliticisation and degeopoliticisation

The vast majority of publications are devoted to issues of economics, poverty alleviation, trade and regional cooperation, and not to the actions of external players on the continent or the interstate relations of African countries. Surprisingly little attention is paid to electoral institutions or intra-elite relations as well. Even if the allowance is made for the fact that African intellectuals may outsource such reasoning to foreign experts in order to save resources and focus on more pressing problems for themselves, they can still be united by a succinct thesis: not politics, but policy.

African think tanks sample



South Africa

African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)

South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)

Institute for Security Studies (ISS)



Kenya

African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS)



Ghana

IMANI Center for Policy and Education

African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET)

Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

When the conversation turns to 'big politics', the experts manage to adhere to the principle of multilateralism. The **South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)**, which was recognised as the second-best African think tank in 2020, is a good example of this feature. In less than two months, the centre managed to have a closed-to-public dialogue between **Russian** and South African experts on the future of relations between the two countries, to discuss in detail the negotiations on climate with China within the framework of FOCAC, to discuss cooperation with **Japan** and the **G20**⁸⁸. In the case of the roundtable with Russian experts, it is noted that South Africa's non-joining of Western sanctions against Russia has caused international criticism, but allowed the country to "maintain autonomy in its foreign relations". At the same time, the experts call on Russia to "articulate how its engagement supports African-led development initiatives rather than pursuing narrow interests". An analytical paper on relations with the G20 notes that after 2022, the organisation has become a much more tense space for consensus-building on many global issues between developed and developing economies⁸⁹.

87 Bruegel. 2020 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report. URL: <https://www.bruegel.org/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2020-Global-Go-To-Think-Tank-Index-Report-Bruegel.pdf>

88 South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Local Opportunities and Global Disputes: Tracking Japan's Engagement with Africa Amid Geopolitical Tensions. URL: <https://saiia.org.za/research/local-opportunities-and-global-disputes-tracking-japans-engagement-with-africa-amid-geopolitical-tensions>
South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). China-Africa Energy and Climate Cooperation: Prospects for FOCAC 2024. URL: <https://saiia.org.za/research/china-africa-energy-and-climate-cooperation-prospects-for-focac-2024>

89 South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). The G7, South Africa, and the Sustainable Climate Agenda for Africa. URL: <https://saiia.org.za/research/the-g7-south-africa-and-the-sustainable-climate-agenda-for-africa>

Like other global poles, African experts agree that the nature of international relations has changed significantly in recent decades. They note that after 1945, Africa remained passive and accepted the geopolitical realities of the international system without an assertive, unified regional policy, while after the end of the Cold War, foreign powers paid insufficient attention to the continent⁹⁰.

There is a growing demand for more representative and equitable global institutions that can manage the risks and opportunities of interdependence among states⁹¹

Africa must be able to integrate into these realities and take its rightful place there.

Considerable attention is paid to security issues. Think tanks study the prospects for reconciliation of the conflicting parties in Sudan; discuss the depletion of support for ISWAP⁹², which opens a window of opportunity to solve the problem in cooperation with local communities; note the negative impact of the conflict in Western Cameroon on the national education system; emphasise the successes of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the path to the difficult, but increasingly achievable goal of national unity⁹³. In general, the recipe for peace in Africa proposed by experts can be summarised

as the formula 'complementarity of the local and continental'. Think tanks often offer sophisticated strategies for interaction with local communities, but at the same time do not forget about security cooperation – e.g. they write about the **AU Agenda 2063: Goal of Silencing the Guns**⁹⁴.

Compared to all others, African think tanks are distinguished by their increased interest in two problems: the integration of African youth into the labour market and environmental issues. Thus, experts write about the lack of competent instructors in technical specialties in **Ethiopia**; note the acute problem of unemployment facing **Ghanaian youth** and propose solving it by creating digital jobs; explain youth **protests in Kenya** by the government's insufficient sensitivity to the needs of this age group⁹⁵. Environmental issues are mainly not abstract, but rather are tied to specific economic problems: the authors of think tanks discuss the impact of climate change on social stability in **South Africa**; the continent's participation in the **High Seas Treaty**; and river management by local communities in **East Africa**⁹⁶.

Continent's countries should achieve greater autonomy in the matter of economic and financial institutional structure

90 African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). The African Union's 2063 Goal of Silencing the Guns in the New World Order. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-african-unions-2063-goal-of-silencing-the-guns-in-the-new-world-order>

91 South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Reimagining Global Economic Governance: African and Global Perspectives. URL: <https://saiia.org.za/research/reimagining-global-economic-governance-african-and-global-perspectives>

92 The organisation is recognised as terrorist, its activities are prohibited on the territory of the Russian Federation.

93 African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). Impact of the Ongoing Crisis on the Education of the North-West Region of Cameroon. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/impact-of-the-ongoing-crisis-on-the-education-of-the-north-west-region-of-cameroon>

African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). East Africa's Path to Unity: Community Growth and Regional Peace Initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/east-africas-path-to-unity-community-growth-and-regional-peace-initiatives-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>

ISS Africa. Is Peace Possible Between Sudan's Warring Parties? URL: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/is-peace-possible-between-sudan-s-warring-parties>

ISS Africa. The End of ISWAP's Hearts and Minds Strategy. URL: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-end-of-iswap-s-hearts-and-minds-strategy>

94 African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). The African Union's 2063 Goal of Silencing the Guns in the New World Order. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/the-african-unions-2063-goal-of-silencing-the-guns-in-the-new-world-order/#:~>

95 African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). Kenya's Historic Gen Z-Led Protests: The Issues. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/kenyas-historic-gen-z-led-protests-the-issues>

African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET). Ethiopia TVET Teachers Professional Competency Challenges and Policy Recommendations. URL: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/insights-ideas/policy-briefs/ethiopia-tvet-teachers-professional-competency-challenges-and-policy-recommendations>

African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET). Bridging the Gap: A Renewed Employment Policy for a Generation of Ghanaian Youth. URL: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/insights-ideas/policy-briefs/bridging-the-gap-a-renewed-employment-policy-for-a-generation-of-ghanaian-youth>

African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET). Ghana Newsletter: Digital and Ecological Transition of Work for Youth Employment. URL: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/insights-ideas/policy-briefs/ghana-newsletter-digital-and-ecological-transition-of-work-for-youth-employment>

96 African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS). STREM Policy Brief. URL: https://www.acts-net.org/images/Publications/Policy-Briefs/CRE/STREM_Policy_Brief.pdf

African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). The Impacts of Climate Change on Social Cohesion and Stability in Southern Africa. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/the-impacts-of-climate-change-on-social-cohesion-and-stability-in-southern-africa>

ISS Africa. Africa Must Help Steer the High Seas Treaty Out of Dire Straits. URL: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africa-must-help-steer-the-high-seas-treaty-out-of-dire-straits>

In macroeconomics, there is a notable thesis that, given the changed geopolitical landscape, the continent's countries should achieve greater autonomy in the matter of economic and financial institutional structure. For example, the need for an African credit agency is noted, and it is also noted that the industrial policy of the United States is becoming increasingly nationalistic and securitised, which has a strong impact on the continent's trade prospects⁹⁷.

In addition, there is room in the intellectual debate for reflection on the impact of **COVID** on the continent's economy and education systems⁹⁸; the **Kush epidemic** (synthetic drug, with epidemic usage rise in Sierra Leone); **women's rights** and the role of supranational institutions in supporting them⁹⁹; the costs of illegal gold mining¹⁰⁰; corruption; technology transfer (including **AI**)¹⁰¹; the ineffectiveness of **electoral commissions** and policies towards small and medium-sized businesses¹⁰².

An important common institutional feature of African think tanks is their sources of funding. Their donors can be divided into two large groups: international institutions (**the World Bank, the United Nations, OXFAM, UNICEF**) and Western-based non-profit foundations and/or governments directly. For example, the following are often mentioned among the donors of African think tanks: **the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency** and others.

Based on the above analysis, it is quite obvious that no powers other than the Western ones support the development of think tanks and think tanks in Africa, which inevitably leads – as a minimum – to a shift of focus on topics peculiar to the agenda of Western countries.

Africa in the mirror of think tanks vs Africa in the media

The results presented above may be compared with the research *The Image of Africa* in the book **Africa 2023: Opportunities and Risks**, published by the **Higher School of Economics** in 2023¹⁰³. At that time, the images of Africa in the media of **Brazil, India, Russia, China, the US, the UK, France, Germany, Türkiye** and **Israel** were surveyed and compared.

In general, the narratives of think tanks mostly duplicate the messages formed by the media, but some differences are still present. For example, regarding the frequency of mentions of foreign countries in Africa, it is striking that there is almost a complete absence of any intelligible analysis of the actions of **the UK** in Africa by experts, while the media (and not only British ones) write about the policy of this country on the continent quite often. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the UK no longer plays a significant role in Africa, but the media continue to view it as a serious player out of habit. However, this claim may be questioned and explained by the number of different hypotheses.

It is also noteworthy how differently the media and think tanks view the scale of Russia's presence in Africa.

97 ISS Africa. AGOA Agoner: Risks of U.S. Trade Policy for Africa. URL: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/agoa-agoing-agoner-risks-of-us-trade-policy-for-africa>
African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET). Is an African Credit Rating Agency the Answer? Maybe, Maybe Not. URL: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/insights-ideas/articles/is-an-african-credit-rating-agency-the-answer-maybe-maybe-not>

98 African Economic Research Consortium (AERC). Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on School Attendance in Kenya. URL: <https://publication.aercafricallibrary.org/items/3c3826bb-b1fb-4731-84c2-e8da752dbe06>

99 African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD). Bringing Women to the Table: The Evolution of FemWise-Africa. URL: <https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/bringing-women-to-the-table-the-evolution-of-femwise-africa>

100 IMANI Africa. An Extended Policy Brief: Gold Rush Chaos and Golden Curse. URL: <https://imaniafrica.org/2024/09/an-extended-policy-brief-gold-rush-chaos-and-golden-curse-how-ghanas-political-elite-are-selling-out-the-nations-posterity-for-personal-gain>

101 African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS). Application of AI in Education in Africa. URL: <https://ai4d.acts-net.org/wp-content/uploads/APPLICATION-OF-AI-IN-EDUCATION-IN-AFRICA.pdf>

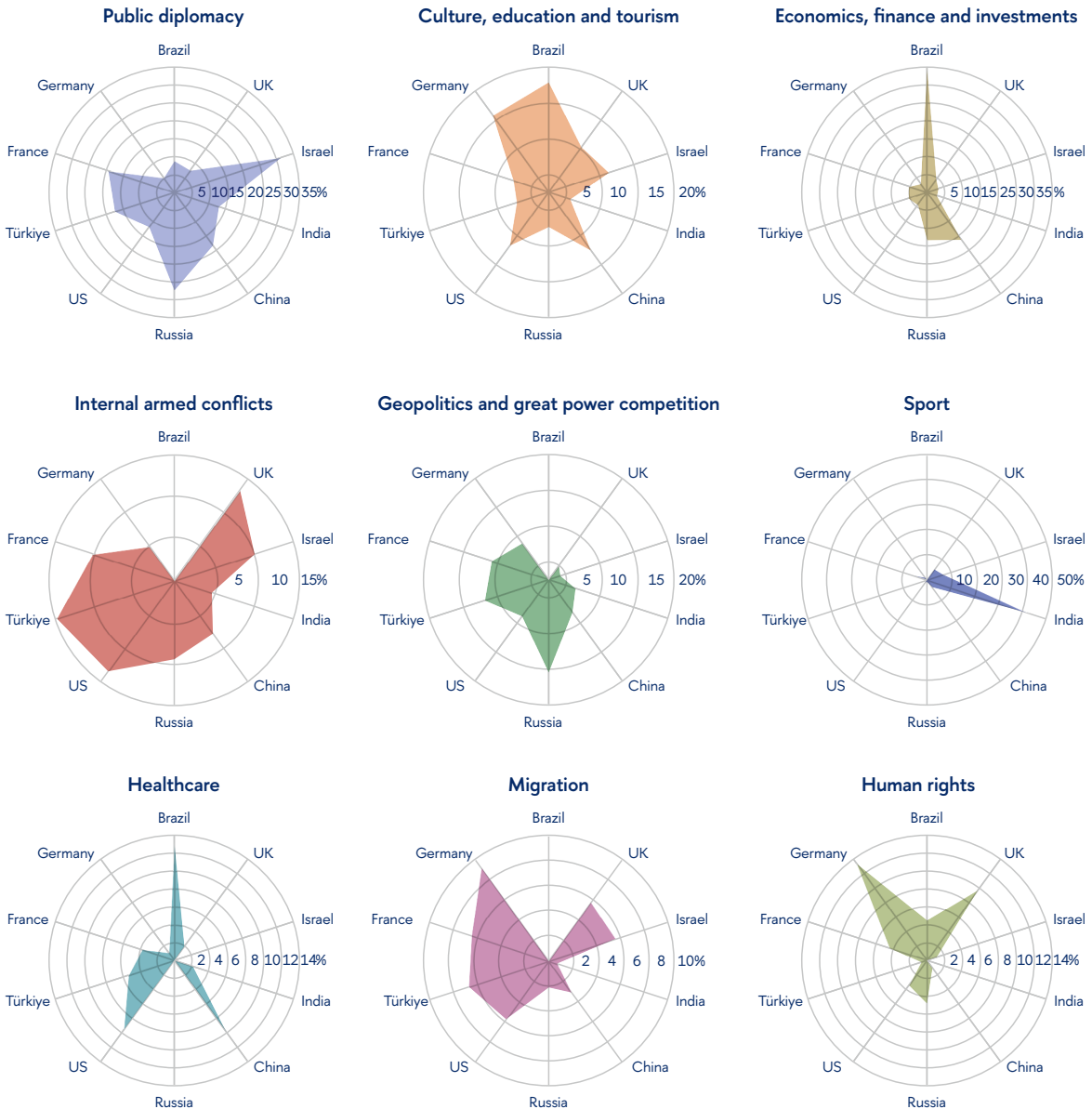
102 African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET). A Strategic Path to Investment and Growth for African SMEs. URL: <https://acetforafrica.org/research-and-analysis/insights-ideas/articles/abt-a-strategic-path-to-investment-and-growth-for-african-smes>

103 Центр изучения Африки НИУ ВШЭ. Africa 2023 Overview. URL: <https://we.hse.ru/irs/cas/africa2023>

If in 2023 the media mostly wrote about “Russia’s return to Africa” or “increasing its presence on the continent”, conceptualising Russia as an actor in the middle of the way towards the stable presence in Africa, then in 2024 think tanks already view it as one of the most influential players on the continent

However, in the majority of cases, the analysis of the media and think tanks’ publications leads to similar results. For example, the Chinese press, like expert centres, is mainly concerned with the politics of its own country and also pays a lot of attention to the United States.

Key African topics in national media



Source: prepared by the HSE University Center for African Studies.

Image of Africa in the mirror of think tanks around the globe

Another interesting similarity in the variation of themes for think tanks and media is that Russian, Chinese and Indian actors tend to view Africa in the context of global economics and politics, while EU countries and the US are more inclined to view Africa 'as it is', detailing the internal politics of African countries and bilateral relations within the continent in isolation from the actions of external forces.

The Russian press is preoccupied with geopolitical issues. Even economic issues take on the features of an international confrontation: the economy and Africa are often mentioned together in the context of the expansion of **BRICS** or the continent's rejection of the dollar as a key exchange currency. On the contrary, Russian experts offer a more technocratic and down-to-earth view.

US journalists write about Africa in the context of security much more often than intellectuals from the same country, and much less often mention the prospects for economic cooperation with the continent. This can probably be explained by the fact that it is much easier for the US press to explain the need for a presence on the continent by appealing to national security rather than to vague prospects for economic growth. Chinese journalists also differ from their colleagues from think tanks. The topics of healthcare, cultural exchange and tourism, which occupy a significant part of the media space, are almost completely absent from expert publications. Instead, intellectuals of their Eastern superpower focus on the economy.

Probably, for both China and the United States, issues of security or humanitarian exchange are just a screen covering up purely economic interests

How Has the "Grand Pivot" in U.S. Foreign Policy Affected the Discourse of Think Tanks on Africa?

The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, as well as the initial steps taken by his administration, may have influenced global intellectual centers' perceptions of strategies for engagement with African countries. To test this hypothesis, we employed the same analytical methods, but this time focused on a different timeframe: from November 2024 to March 2025. Admittedly, a few months is too short a period to expect a fundamental transformation of African discourse within think tanks; therefore, we primarily concentrated on how these institutions assess the potential impact of Trump's approach on Africa in the coming years.

Two global centers where the transformation of U.S. foreign policy has not yet prompted a rethinking of Africa's future are **China and Russia**. In the former, this may be attributed to an emphasis on long-term trends and the absence of fundamental shifts in global competition with the U.S.; in the latter, to preoccupation with more pressing issues, chiefly the resolution of the crisis in Ukraine. For example, Chinese analysts discussed **Rwandan President Paul Kagame's** speech at the Doha Forum, in which he praised China's efforts to build relationships with African countries¹⁰⁴; the functioning of global supply chains in the context of competition with the U.S.¹⁰⁵; the meeting of **Chinese and Indian foreign ministers in Johannesburg**¹⁰⁶; energy transition and security¹⁰⁷; and the lobbying of Global South interests in the **G20** via **Brazil, South Africa**, and India¹⁰⁸.

104 Center For China and Globalization. President Kagame, Mbumba Defend China-Africa Relations at Doha Forum. URL: <http://en.ccg.org.cn/archives/85098>

105 China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE). Lu Xinhong: The Train of Thought, Principles, and Paths for Industrial Cooperation Among China, Japan, and South Korea under the New Situation. URL: <http://english.cciee.org.cn/Detail.aspx?newsId=21564&TId=254>

106 China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE). To improve relations with China, India needs concrete, effective act. URL: https://www.ciis.org.cn/english/COMMENTARIES/202503/t20250320_9548.html

107 Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). Yu Hongyuan: Reshaping the energy security governance system. URL: <https://www.siis.org.cn/Commentary/16247.jhtml>

108 Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). Global Ecological Governance Boost. URL: <https://www.siis.org.cn/Commentary/16311.jhtml>

Russian intellectuals observe that, in the new geopolitical reality, Russia and the U.S. could potentially collaborate on conflict resolution and other issues on the African continent¹⁰⁹

At the same time, some analysts note that as early as 2018, the Trump administration explicitly referenced the return of great-power competition in its **National Security Strategy**¹¹⁰. Overall, Russian analysts continue to focus on regional expertise¹¹¹, cooperation in education¹¹², conflict resolution¹¹³, criticism of France's policy in Africa¹¹⁴, and outlining the contours of a new multipolar world¹¹⁵.

In India, Trump's prospective Africa policy has prompted extensive debate. Some experts see Trump's election as a positive sign for the continent.

In their view, the pragmatic business-oriented approach of the American leader could benefit African governments seeking to export natural resources and attract investment

It is implicitly suggested that Trump appears less interested in influencing the internal affairs of African countries than his predecessor¹¹⁶. Analysts note that although Trump previously considered ending the **African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)**, his global rivalry with China and the Belt and Road Initiative will likely deter him from doing so.

Clear beneficiaries include **Egypt** (due to Trump's close ties with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi) and **Morocco** (in the context of U.S. support for Moroccan sovereignty over **Western Sahara**).

Other think tanks urge attention to those who may lose from Trump's return to power, particularly **South Africa**, which currently chairs the G20. Trump has already signed an order cutting aid to South Africa, Secretary of State Marco Rubio has refused to attend G20 meetings, and a group of influential senators is calling for South Africa's exclusion from AGOA¹¹⁷. As previously noted, South Africa has long irritated Republican-leaning think tanks, making Trump's pressure on the country appear less spontaneous.

European think tanks anticipate little positive from Trump's presidency in relation to Africa

They largely expect him to adhere to the **"America First"** principle, which, in the African context, may imply reductions in humanitarian and investment projects. This could, in turn,

increase Chinese influence on the continent. Moreover, relations with South Africa have re-emerged as a topic of concern. European analysts argue that close cooperation with other **BRICS** members offers South Africa few advantages, given Trump's fixation on economic confrontation with the group.

109 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Россия и США за рамками украинского кризиса. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/analytcs/rossiya-i-ssha-za-ramkami-ukrainskogo-krizisa/?sphrase_id=189166505

110 Россия в глобальной политике. Перестройка мирового порядка. URL: <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/perestrojka-miroporyadka-grem/>

111 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). Марокко и Алжир: центры силы африканского континента. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/columns/sandbox/marokko-i-alzhir-tsentry-sily-afrikanskogo-kontinenta/?sphrase_id=189166505

112 Российский совет по международным делам (РСМД). В РСМД обсудили сотрудничество России со странами Африки в области образования. URL: https://russiancouncil.ru/news/v-rsm-d-obsudili-sotrudnichestvo-rossii-so-stranami-afriki-v-oblasti-obrazovaniya/?sphrase_id=189166505

113 ИМЭМО РАН. Круглый стол «Конфликт в районе Великих Африканских озер и его международный контекст». URL: <https://www.imemo.ru/news/events/text/kruglyi-stol-konflikt-v-rayone-velikih-afrikanskih-ozer-i-ego-mezhdunarodny-kontekst>

114 ИМЭМО РАН. «Сегодня, я вижу, особенно грустен твой взгляд»: Сенегал и Чад не рады французским войскам в Африке. URL: <https://www.imemo.ru/news/events/text/segodnya-ya-vizhu-osobbenno-grusten-tvoy-vzglyad-senegal-i-chad-ne-radi-frantsuzskim-voyskam-v-afrike>

115 Россия в глобальной политике. В Евразию с интеллектуальной свободой. URL: <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/v-evraziyu-karaganov/>; Валдайский клуб. Многоликий неокolonializm и современная Африка. URL: https://ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/mnogolikiy-neokolonializm-i-sovremennaya-afrika/?sphrase_id=765664

116 ORF. Trump's transactional pragmatism may auger well for Africa. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/trump-s-transactional-pragmatism-may-auger-well-for-africa>

117 ORF. Navigating Trump's shadow: South Africa's G20 challenge. URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/navigating-trump-s-shadow-south-africa-s-g20-challenge>

On the other hand, there is a positive signal: in light of potential U.S. tariffs on European goods,

analysts encourage the EU to pivot toward closer engagement with the African continent, valuing the potential of local markets¹¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, the most detailed debate on the implications of Trump's election for Africa has unfolded in the U.S. Much attention is devoted to the administration's willingness to reduce (or maintain) support programs for the continent. According to **Brookings** experts, Trump will likely retain some form of funding for the **International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)**. The future of **AGOA** remains uncertain; much depends on the outcome of debates over the inclusion of South Africa, which has drawn considerable **Republican criticism**. The **Prosper Africa initiative**, launched by Trump's first administration to support trade and funded by **USAID**, may be jeopardized by the effective dismantling of that agency.

The **Peterson Institute** analysts take a similar view: AGOA is increasingly vulnerable, though repealing it amid rising Chinese influence would be a strategic error¹¹⁹.

It is anticipated that U.S. expectations of foreign partners will increase — not in terms of democratic governance standards, but rather in terms of financial returns.

Another key theme is Donald Trump's obsession with rare earth metals. The **Heritage Foundation**,

aligned with the new administration, recommends seeking partners in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa**¹²⁰. Experts are already discussing a proposed "resources for security" deal, submitted by the government of **Democratic Republic of the Congo** to the Trump administration in March 2025¹²¹. On the related energy issue, a possible shift is noted from an "energy transition" agenda to one of "energy security". American diplomats may begin downplaying the environmental damage caused by CO2 emissions and stop pushing African countries to adopt renewable energy sources.

Finally, renewed attention is being paid to the issue of U.S. military presence in the region. Analysts consider the prospects for the **United States Africa Command (AFRICOM)**¹²², while conservative voices from the Heritage Foundation advocate for a more active security role by countries such as Spain and Italy¹²³. Discussions also focus on Africa as a source of Islamic terrorism¹²⁴, and U.S. support for Morocco's claims to Western Sahara¹²⁵. There is broad consensus that great-power rivalry between the U.S. and China will only intensify in the coming years, with Africa emerging as a key theater of this struggle¹²⁶.

Overall, global intellectual expectations regarding Trump's Africa policy are mixed. On one hand, strategic competition with China necessitates expanding U.S. military and economic engagement with the continent.

On the other, the administration's initial steps and its declared adherence to "America First"

118 Bruegel. How should the EU respond to Trump's tariffs? URL: <https://www.bruegel.org/newsletter/how-should-eu-respond-trumps-tariffs>

119 Peterson Institute. Letting a trade act expire won't fix the US-Africa trade deficit. URL: <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/letting-trade-act-expire-wont-fix-us-africa-trade-deficit>

120 Heritage Foundation. Securing Critical Mineral Supply Chains Is a Defense Priority. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/securing-critical-mineral-supply-chains-defense-priority>

121 Peterson Institute. Why a US-DRC minerals-for-security deal could backfire. URL: <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/why-us-drc-minerals-security-deal-could-backfire>

122 CSIS. AFRICOM at 17: Shaping U.S.-Africa Relations. URL: <https://www.csis.org/events/africom-17-shaping-us-africa-relations>

123 Heritage Foundation. Look to the Seas: Why a Regional Focus in the North and South Strengthens NATO Deterrence. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/look-the-seas-why-regional-focus-the-north-and-south-strengthens-nato-deterrence>

124 Heritage Foundation. More Islamist Terror Is Coming. We Are Woefully Unprepared. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/commentary/more-islamist-terror-coming-we-are-woefully-unprepared>

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have already resulted in cuts to several critical humanitarian programs, possibly marking the start of a broader trend. It is likely that the U.S. will not withdraw from Africa completely—nor are they in a position to do so—but will instead shift toward a more pragmatic model of engagement, focused primarily on financial returns rather than political goals (with cooperation between African states and China standing as a notable exception).

External actors that once justified their competitive edge by pledging non-interference in the domestic politics of African nations must now show additional creativity in developing new strategic approaches to the African arena

Conclusion

Despite the obvious differences in the approaches of think tanks representing different global poles to Africa, they are united by one thesis: the continent is perhaps the most important geopolitical and economic arena of the 21st century. However, so far this is not reflected in the prevalence of this topic in the publications of many intellectual centers. On average, Africa still attracts less interest than Europe, Asia or America, but experts from each of these poles agree that this will change soon.

The second consensus is that Africa is an important independent subject of international politics, and not just a place of confrontation between global players or a platform for extracting resources. The future of this subject is more vague: perhaps the first role will be played by such influential regional agents as Nigeria, South Africa or Egypt; perhaps the idea of Pan-Africanism will prevail, and the countries of the continent will be able to act as a united front; finally, it is quite possible that African countries will become just one of the, albeit extremely influential, components of the “global South”.

The strategies that seem most optimal for interaction with the continent to the think tanks of the global poles are, at first glance, much more diverse. While China publicly positions itself as a supporter of the “business and only business” approach, Europe is focused on rethinking the mistakes of the past; India emphasizes its unique readiness for cooperation with all interested parties on the continent; the United States (before Donald Trump’s presidency) was primarily concerned with issues of security and democracy, and Russia is captivated by issues of geopolitical confrontation. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the gradual convergence of these different points of view: Indian experts, supposedly exclusively inclined

towards cooperation, cannot refrain from politicization when it comes to China’s interests on the continent; China’s own interests are clearly not limited to business; Russian intellectuals increasingly say that interaction with Africa cannot and should not be limited to cooperation in the field of security or the “export of sovereignty” and are actively lobbying for the development of economic ties with the continent. The future of the United States in Africa, which until recently was the only player that was truly deeply and widely involved in all socio-political spheres of the continent, is in great question.

Perhaps the main conclusion for African countries from this chapter may be that despite the superficial differences in the rhetoric of global players, there is no continental specialization of the EU, the US, China or Russia: all poles of power in one form or another pursue their own interests here and cannot be the only winning partners for interaction. The rich experience of the continent’s civilizational diversity, the ability to find a balance between completely different, irreconcilable forces, can make an important contribution to the search by African countries for their place in the future of world politics: balance and diversification, and not betting on just one horse — this is exactly what can ensure prosperity for the continent.



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