

Articles & Op-Eds

Russian Activities in Africa

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Strategic Multilayer Assessment

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An in-depth look at Putin's economic, military, and diplomatic outreach to the continent, which has extended well past North African states following his successful power play in Syria.

The following is an excerpt from Chapter 12 of the SMA White Paper [Russian Strategic Intentions](#). To read the full chapter, download the PDF.

Russia's outreach to North Africa goes back to the beginning of Vladimir Putin's presidency, whereas its venture into the rest of Africa is far more recent. Moscow's success in Syria is helping to fuel such outreach and create opportunities it likely hadn't planned on prior to the intervention. Its political priorities are creating a perception of Russia as a great power, a key regional powerbroker, and a partner that stands by its friends and can talk to everyone, pulling Western allies closer. Economic objectives are also important, including access to energy and natural resource markets. Soft power plays a key role as well. China is clearly a more dominant actor in Africa, but Russia is making inroads. Ironically, it is China that poses a greater overall threat to Russia than does NATO and the West, but Moscow prioritizes anti-Americanism. Ultimately, Western inaction made it easy for Putin to step in and assert himself, so a strong and coherent U.S. presence is the best deterrent for Russia in Africa...