



## Re-imagining African—Nordic relations in a changing global order

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study asks how the special relationship between countries in Africa and the Nordic region may be affected by a changing global order, that the African–Nordic cooperation can continue to evolve and remain relevant for both regions.

The meeting in Helsinki on 14 June 2022 is the 20th meeting of the forum of African–Nordic Foreign Ministers. The forum was established in 2000 between five Nordic countries and ten African countries. It was intended to emphasize the political importance of Africa and to demonstrate that Africa–Nordic relations went beyond development cooperation. The forum meets alternately and rotates among African and Nordic countries and African hosts have included Benin, Botswana, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania. The number of African countries expanded over time and now numbers around 25.

The annual meeting is an opportunity to consolidate the special relationship between African and Nordic countries and creates a space where political issues of mutual concern can be discussed. As such, it has helped to broaden the African–Nordic relations beyond development cooperation and towards a more politically-oriented and interest-based strategic partnership. Beyond the annual foreign ministers meeting, the other aspect the report looks into is what the sum-total of African-Nordic bilateral relations in the areas of trade, development, peace and security and multilateral cooperation reveals about the status of the overall relationship.

Africa pursues strategic partnerships that helps it to develop and strengthen the continent's economic potential, political identity, and its role on the global stage. In this study we pay particular attention to Africa's relationship with China, Europe, India, Russia and Turkey. One of the dominant features of Africa's international relations has been its non-alignment. African countries have been careful to seek partnerships with many different states and regions, without being pulled into any one alliance that may prevent it from also gaining support for its development from others. Therefore, in its strategic partnerships, African countries seeks engagements that will help it to grow its economies.

The African Union (AU) has helped Africa to develop into a regional bloc second only to the EU in its institutional development. This process has significantly strengthened Africa's international agency and Africa now speaks as one voice on a diverse range of issues, for example through the African common position on enlarging the United Nations Security Council, including more seats for Africa.

The Nordic countries share both a geographic location, closely intertwined historic relations as well as some social, political and economic similarities, such as social democratic political systems that consist of a combination of state-capitalism, social-welfare, inclusion and tolerance, equality and political freedom. The Nordic countries are all developed industrial or post-industrial economies, that are integrated if not leading countries in the global information economy. All the Nordic countries are either members of the EU or in the case of Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the Schengen agreement (common visa policy), which represents an important shared political, historic, cultural, economic and normative identity. In the context of this report, Denmark, Finland and Sweden are thus also part of the African-European (AU–EU) strategic partnership, and their Nordic-Africa and European-African relations thus have to be closely coordinated.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden have a shared history of support to the liberation efforts of a number of countries in Southern Africa from colonial and white minority rule. Whilst western powers mainly viewed African liberation efforts from a Cold War perspective, the Nordic countries recognised these

liberation struggles as movements for independence from colonialism and for freedom from racism. Among Western countries, the position adopted by the Nordic countries remains unique and partly explains the ‘special relationship’ between African and Nordic countries.

In response to the changing global order, the Nordic countries are adapting by trying to preserve and strengthen the normative and rules-based multilateral foundations of the global order, amongst others by cooperating with each other and other like-minded states to defend and support a rules-based multilateral system, including especially at its core the United Nations (UN). The Russian war on Ukraine has generated additional attention on the need to defend an international system based on the UN Charter and related international legal principles and provisions that recognise the sovereignty of states and the illegality of using force other than in self-defence or for enforcement actions sanctioned by the UN Security Council. The topic is likely to be a prominent item on the agenda of the forthcoming African–Nordic Foreign Ministers meeting.

Russia’s willingness to wage war on another sovereign state to pursue its political, security and economic interest has significantly altered the threat landscape for the Nordic countries and has prompted both Finland and Sweden to apply to NATO for membership. Whilst many African countries have voted in favour of resolutions at the UN that condemned the Russian war on Ukraine, others chose not to take a position to remain non-aligned.

The war in Ukraine highlights the importance of regular African–Nordic Foreign Ministers meetings, where such new developments, and its implications for African, Nordic and global peace, security and socio-economic development can be discussed. It also shows the value of the informal nature of the arrangement that enables open dialogue on emerging issues, and that gives countries the opportunity to explain their positions to each other with a view to enhancing mutual understanding.

A special feature of the relationship then and now has been solidarity and political commitments to self-determination, and support for African agency and empowerment through, amongst others development cooperation. The characteristics of Nordic bilateral aid to African partner countries has slowly changed over time and an increasing share of aid is now channelled as earmarked funding through multilateral institutions. Although the proportion of African–Nordic trade and investment is relatively small, compared to Africa’s larger trade partners and the total volumes of Nordic trade and investment, it is nevertheless an important element in the relationship, and one that is likely to become increasingly prominent in future. In the area of political and diplomatic relations, African–Nordic cooperation at the United Nations and in other multilateral fora has received special attention. Given the increasing tensions and rivalry among regional and global powers and the uncertainties and turbulence that is associated with a changing global order, African and Nordic countries have strengthened their cooperation to defend and safeguard a rule-based multilateral system, with the United Nations system at its centre. This has also resulted in significant Nordic support to the African Union, including in the area of peace and security.

Overall, the combined sum of the bilateral relations between African and Nordic countries, coupled with the annual Foreign Minister’s meeting, show that the relationship between these two regions is grounded in a long history of solidarity and partnership, that it is based on a diverse range of engagements across the political, peace and security, trade and investment and development cooperation spheres, as well as a people-to-people research, education and cultural exchanges, and that there is ample scope for continued growth and innovation in the future, especially in areas such as peace mediation, the blue economy, renewable energy and new technologies.

## RE-IMAGINING AFRICAN–NORDIC RELATIONS IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER

# Introduction

Ahead of the 20th Annual African–Nordic Foreign Ministers’ meeting, scheduled for 14 June 2022 in Helsinki, this study considers how turbulence in the international system may affect relations between Africa and the Nordic region (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden). In particular, it examines how the special relationship between these two regions may be affected by changes in the global order, and how it may have to adapt to ensure that the relationship evolves and remains relevant for both regions.

The report evaluates the levels and spheres of African–Nordic cooperation and is divided into four parts. First, an overview of African and Nordic positions and priorities is presented. Second, Africa’s strategic partnerships with various countries and regions – China, Europe, India, Russia and Turkey – are explored, in order to compare the Africa–Nordic relationship with these others. Contributors examines how these partnerships are structured, the types of initiatives or activities undertaken to sustain them, and how these partnerships have adapted to today’s global order. Third, the report analyses several elements of the Africa–Nordic relationship that may shape the direction of the partnership in future, including:

- Nordic development assistance to Africa;
- migration and its potential implications for Africa and the Nordic countries, including the impact of the war in Ukraine;
- Africa–Nordic trade, investment and loans;
- political, peace and security relations and cooperation;
- African and Nordic support for, and cooperation in, multilateral organisations;
- climate change.

Finally, the various sections of the report are synthesised, and overall findings are presented.

To incorporate a wide set of African and Nordic perspectives, several Nordic- and Africa-based institutions and researchers have been invited to contribute to this report:

**Table 1. List of partners**

African Partners	Nordic Partners
Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), Pretoria, South Africa	Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Bergen, Norway
Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), Helsinki, Finland
South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), Johannesburg, South Africa	Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), Uppsala, Sweden
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Durban, South Africa	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) – Coordinator, Oslo, Norway

In addition to these African and Nordic partners, Professor Emel Parlar Dal of the Department of International Relations, Marmara University, Ankara, has prepared the section on Africa–Turkey relations.

## AFRICAN–NORDIC RELATIONS: MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS

*Elling Tjønneland, Senior Researcher, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)*

The Helsinki meeting in June 2022 is the 20th gathering of the forum of African–Nordic foreign ministers. It was established as an informal conference allowing for face-to-face discussion among foreign ministers. Sweden, through its foreign minister, the late Ms Anna Lindh, initiated the forum in 2000. It brought together the five Nordic countries with ten ‘like-minded’ African countries. The aim has been to emphasise the political importance of Africa and to demonstrate that Nordic–Africa relations involve more than development cooperation. The meeting venue alternates between a Nordic and an African country. African hosts have included Benin, Botswana, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania.

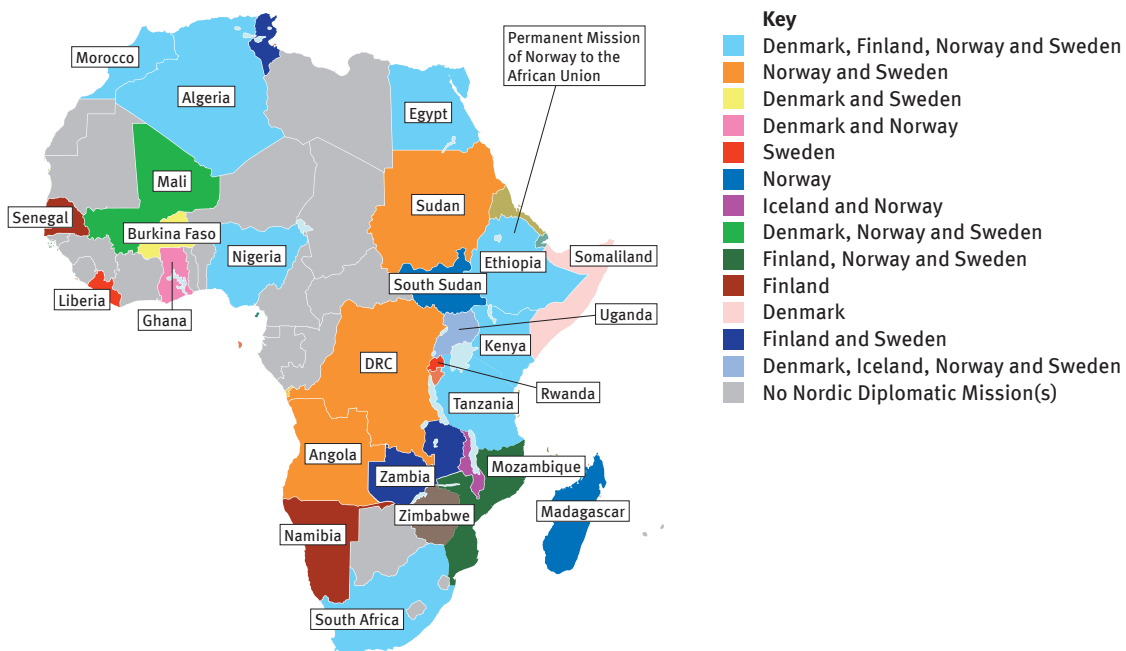
For the first ten years, the number of participating African countries remained fairly stable. The first main expansion came with the meeting in South Africa in 2015, where 17 African countries were represented. At the 19th meeting in Tanzania, 24 African countries participated; and 25 African countries have been invited to the 2022 meeting in Helsinki. This expansion partly reflects the priorities of the host country, as well as evolving geopolitical priorities, a wish to make participation more representative, and a stronger Nordic focus on the Sahel region. However, it is also recognised that the number of participating countries should be limited, to maintain the informality of the forum.

The forum discusses global issues of mutual interest, with an emphasis on the development challenges facing Africa. In recent years there has been a focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063. Issues related to climate change, trade and investment, and peace and security are recurrent dominant themes.

There is no formal agreement that steers the Africa–Nordic partnership, but a practice has developed around the annual African–Nordic Foreign Ministers’ meetings. No formal agreements are reached at these meetings, but an agreed press statement is usually issued. The intention is to create an informal space where African and Nordic countries can discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. All the countries involved appear to value the exchange in its current format, and there are no plans to change it. The format reflects the special relationship between the African and Nordic countries involved: it is informal, with frank discussions but no pressure to achieve a formal agreement on a given set of issues. This also means there is no need for a prior meeting of senior officials to prepare the agenda and agreements. Thus, transaction costs are very low compared to the other partnership meetings analysed in this report.

In Part Two, contributors analyse the substance of the bilateral relationships between the African and Nordic countries as regards trade, aid and forms of cooperation. The Africa–Nordic relationship can be thought of as a multi-bilateral relationship similar to the Africa–China relationship: the multilateral element is the annual African–Nordic meeting of foreign ministers, and the bilateral element is the sum of all bilateral relations between the African and Nordic countries involved.

**Figure 1. Nordic embassies in Africa**



**Table 2. Nordic Embassies in Africa**

Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
12	13	2	17 + permanent mission to the AU	20

**List of Nordic Embassies in Africa**

<b>Mozambique</b>	Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Namibia</b>	Finland
<b>Nigeria</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Rwanda</b>	Sweden
<b>Senegal</b>	Finland
<b>South Africa</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>South Sudan</b>	Norway
<b>Sudan</b>	Norway and Sweden
<b>Tanzania</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Tunisia</b>	Finland and Sweden
<b>Uganda</b>	Denmark, Iceland Norway and Sweden
<b>Zambia</b>	Finland and Sweden
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	Sweden
<b>African Union</b>	Norway

<b>Algeria</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Angola</b>	Norway and Sweden
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Denmark and Sweden
<b>DRC</b>	Norway and Sweden
<b>Egypt</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Ethiopia</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Ghana</b>	Denmark and Norway
<b>Kenya</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden
<b>Liberia</b>	Sweden
<b>Malawi</b>	Iceland and Norway
<b>Mali</b>	Denmark, Norway and Sweden
<b>Morocco</b>	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden

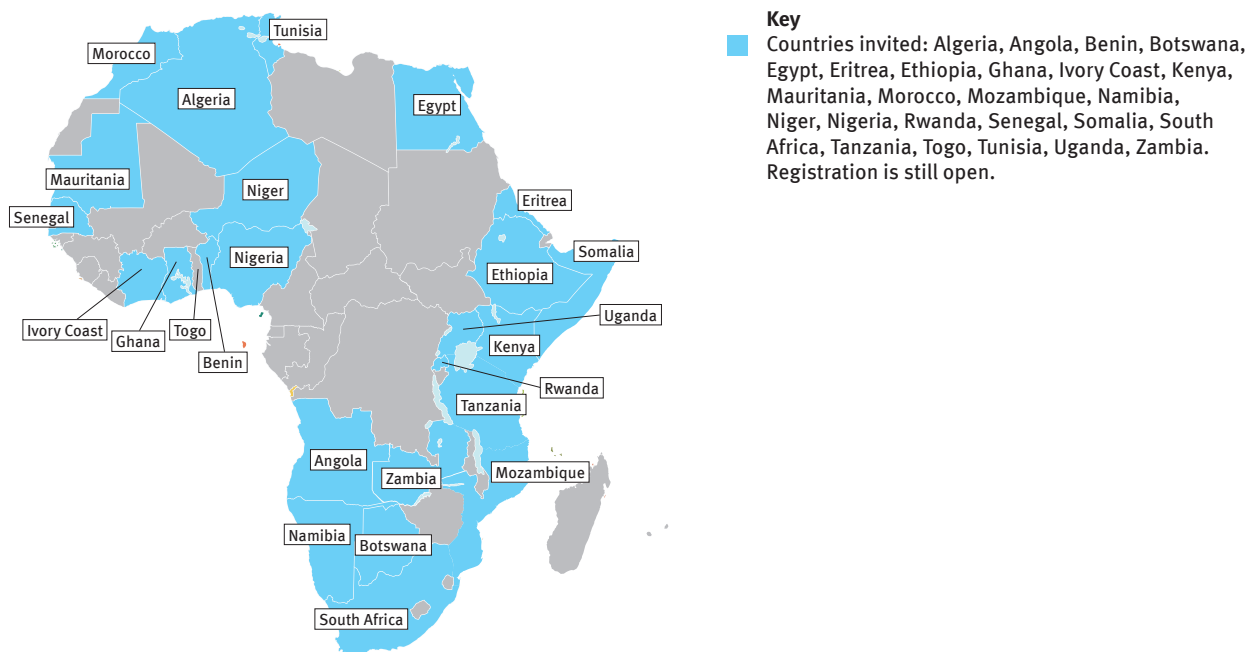
**Table 3. African Embassies in Nordic Countries**

Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
9	8		6	18

**List African Embassies in Nordic Countries**

Algeria	Denmark, Norway and Sweden	Mozambique	Sweden
Angola	Sweden	Namibia	Sweden
Benin	Denmark	Nigeria	Sweden
Botswana	Sweden	Rwanda	Sweden
Burkina Faso	Denmark	Senegal	Finland
Cameroon	Denmark	South Africa	Denmark, Norway and Sweden
Egypt	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden	South Sudan	Norway
Eritrea	Denmark and Sweden	Sudan	Norway and Sweden
Ethiopia	Sweden	Tanzania	Sweden
Ghana	Denmark and Norway	Tunisia	Finland and Sweden
Kenya	Sweden	Uganda	Denmark
Liberia	Sweden	Zambia	Sweden
Morocco	Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden	Zimbabwe	Sweden

**Figure 2. African countries invited to the 20th African-Nordic Foreign Ministers Meeting 2022**



# PART ONE

## AFRICA'S POSITION IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER AND ITS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES

*Jesutimilehin O. Akamo, Happi Cynthia, Tigist Kebede Feyissa, Moussa Soumahoro and Tseday Tilahun, Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)*

### Short History

Decolonisation and the fight for political freedom dominated the post-Second World War era in Africa. Political and economic ties were vertical, because African countries had closer relations with their former colonial masters north of the Mediterranean. Moreover, there were few incentives to engage elsewhere. The post-colonial dispensation followed the same path; and for a long time, horizontal (intra-Africa) political and economic relations remained weak. Even today, the share of intra-African exports as a percentage of total African exports – while increasing, from about 10% in 1995 to around 17% in 2017 – still is very low compared to levels for Europe (69%), Asia (59%), and North America (31%) (Brookings, 2019). Although vertical trade has been declining and intra-African trade increasing, extra-African trade has been rising, but not toward Europe and North America. A similar trend can be observed in the political sphere, where the African countries are increasingly looking to the East for political support, cooperation and partnerships.

With the continent united in its struggle against colonialism, talks about setting up a pan-African continental institution yielded fruit in 1963 with the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This institution, which became the African Union (AU) in 2000, has moved beyond being a forum for talks around political integration to one that now drives economic integration to enhance intra-African relations. To enhance the continent's economy through boosting horizontal trade, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement was adopted in Rwanda on 21 March 2018: a major component includes boosting intra-African trade. Africa has embarked on a journey from decolonisation to self-determination; and Africa-wide political and inter-regional economic cooperation has been an important part of the story. AfCFTA implementation is the latest major milestone along this path.

### Strategic Partnerships

Having self-identified as a regional bloc, the AU has sought to leverage the political capital that multilateralism makes available through strategic partnerships (Lee, 2013). Strategic partnerships for Africa develop and strengthen the continent's potentials, political identity and global role. This effectively puts the AU at the nexus of this conversation, as the 'Voice of Africa' (Murithi, 2012). The AU's vision emphasises the need for strategic partnerships to 'market Africa's position, acquire support to enable the attainment of her objectives, increase Africa's international standing and obtain the global leverage that would enable the continent to maximise its impact on the world scene' (African Union, 2022).

These are clear objectives that have guided the AU's relations with partners over the decades. For one thing, with huge economic potential in terms of raw materials and demography, the continent needs investments to translate these resources into values of global worth. Examples of the continent's pursuit of partnerships that can help it to unlock this potential value include the Nordic-African Business Summit and the establishment of Norway's Permanent Mission to the AU, the Forum on

China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), the African Union–European Union (AU–EU) Summit, the Franco–African Summit, the US–Africa Leaders’ Summit, the Africa–Russia Summit, the Africa–Turkey Summit, and the Germany–Africa Business Summit. These initiatives are indicative of Africa’s openness and non-aligned approach to development partners, and of the number of actors who have been taking an interest in Africa.

### **Non-Alignment**

During decolonisation, the prevailing global order was characterised as a Cold War which locked the two superpowers – the USA and the USSR – in a bipolar nuclear stalemate (Baig, Jiang and Singay, 2020). Seeking to remain neutral, Africa cooperated with other countries in the Global South through the Non-Aligned Movement. However, many countries in Africa became embroiled in wars and internal conflicts which were essentially proxy conflicts among the superpowers and those aligned with them.

The immediate post-Cold War era of the 1990s was radically different, as the collapse of the USSR left the USA as the sole leader of a unipolar global order. From an African perspective, the priorities of this period were managing intra-state African conflicts, which were driven by post-colonial structural gaps that exposed a range of economic, political and socio-cultural fragilities.

Starting in the 2000s, the world has seen the rise of a multipolar global order, not least in economic terms. Politics and economics are closely interlinked in Africa, as underdevelopment is the key challenge to be overcome. The need to find partners that can help Africa to develop its full economic potential has thus dominated its search for strategic partnerships. In this process, a dominant feature of Africa’s international relations has been non-alignment, because African countries have taken care to seek partnerships with many different states and regions, without being pulled into any one alliance that may rule out developmental support from others (Brainard & Chollet, 2007; Hoeffler, 2019).

### **Africa as aid recipient vs. trade and investment and African agency**

From the era following decolonisation until the 2000s, and to some extent also today, Africa has been presented as a continent in need of humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping and development aid. Whilst Africa needs aid, the AU, African states and others have argued that investments which can help Africa to unlock its own potential, and trade with Africa, including exports, can help Africa to industrialise and such economic growth will be a far more effective enabler of development than aid. Such aid has helped many, but it has not managed to help Africa to make significant development gains over the past 50 years. Therefore, in its strategic partnerships, Africa seeks engagements that can help it to boost its economies.

Over this period, the OAU and AU have developed Africa into a politically united regional bloc second only to the EU in institutional development. This process has significantly strengthened Africa’s international agency: Africa now speaks as one voice on a diverse range of issues, through the development of African common positions at the AU. One example is the common African position on enlarging the UN Security Council, with more seats for Africa – including one or more permanent seats (UN Press Release, 2020).

### **Africa’s Vision for the future**

Another example of African agency is Agenda 2063, presenting Africa’s vision for its growth and development over the next 50 years, starting in January 2013 when it was adopted (African Union,



2013). It also looks back at the past 50 years since the OAU was established in 1963. This blueprint for Africa's development and economic growth have been at the forefront of political dialogue between African countries and international partners, including the Nordic countries.

Within this framing, Africa has assertively pursued initiatives, frameworks, programmes, roadmaps, and action plans towards achieving inclusive and sustainable (social and economic) development, economic growth, continental and regional integration, democratic governance, and peace and security. The rationale is to facilitate development on the continent, but it also refocuses and reprioritises Africa's agenda, in order to reposition it on the global stage. Agenda 2063 has become a platform that informs the directions and objectives of Africa's strategic partnerships: for example, the AU–EU partnership aligns with Agenda 2063<sup>1</sup>.

However, despite Africa's growing ability to generate and set its own agenda, and despite its growing capacity to become increasingly assertive in formulating and promoting its positions, the inequitable distribution of Covid-19 vaccines showed that Africa still struggles, at times, to transform this agency into direct benefits for its peoples. Strategic partnerships thus remain central in assisting Africa to gain the political and material support it needs in order to achieve Agenda 2063 and related objectives such as Silencing the Guns by 2020.

## NORDIC PARTNERSHIPS AND PRIORITIES IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER

*Asha Ali, Cedric de Coning, Kristin Haugevik, Craig Moffat and Øyvind Svendsen, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)*

### Background

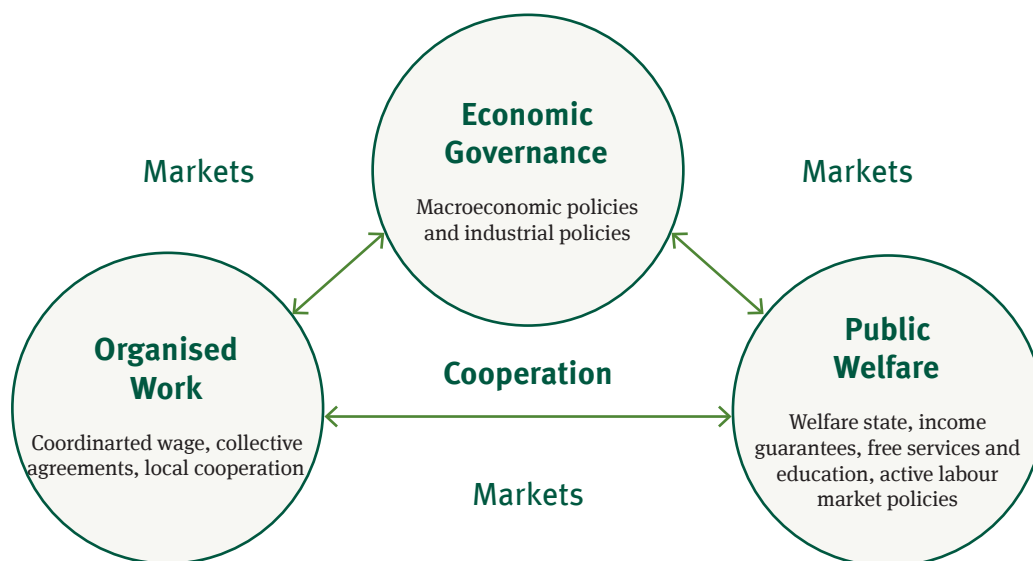
The Nordic countries share geographic location, closely intertwined historic relations, and several social, political and economic similarities. For example, the region is seen as sharing the 'Nordic Model' characterised by a social democratic system that consists of a combination of state capitalism, social welfare, inclusion and tolerance, equality and political freedom (Hammerstad, 2012).

Denmark, Norway and Sweden have their own distinct languages, but with enough of a common basis as to be mutually comprehensible. Finnish, however, is not Indo-European; and Icelandic, although historically rooted in Old Norse, does not share enough features with the other Scandinavian languages to allow everyday communication. The characteristics of the Nordic Model are presented in Figure 1.

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<sup>1</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/africa-eu-partnership\\_en#header-3723](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/africa-eu-partnership_en#header-3723). Various references were made to high-level meeting that demonstrate this.

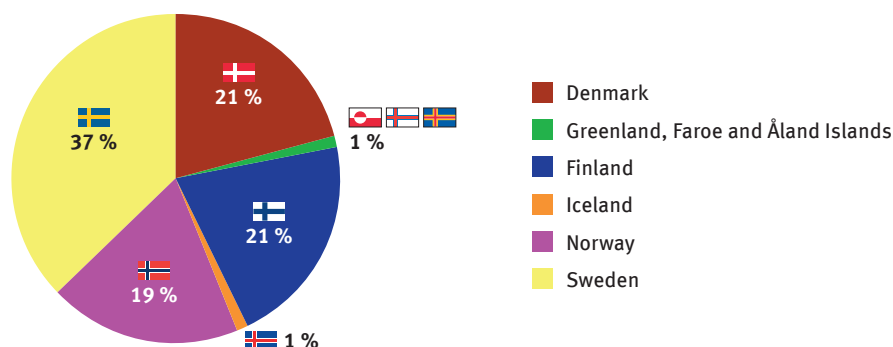
**Figure 3. The Basic Pillars of the Nordic Model**



Source: Jon Erik Dølvik (2013): Grunnpilarene i de nordiske modellene. NordMod 2030 Partial Report 1

All the Nordic countries are developed industrial or post-industrial economies, integrated if not leading countries in the global information economy. Iceland has a population of less than 400,000, or approximately 1% of the total Nordic population. The other countries have relatively similar population sizes, with Denmark, Finland and Norway each between 5 and 6 million and Sweden between 9 and 10 million inhabitants. As a result of their economic development, low population sizes and the Nordic socio-political and economic model, these countries continually rank at the top of the UNDP Human Development Index. In the 2020 Human Development Report, Norway ranked first, Iceland fourth, Sweden seventh, Denmark tenth and Finland eleventh.

**Figure 4. Population of the Nordic countries as percentages**



The history of the Nordic countries is closely intertwined. What are today Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden were part of the Kalmar Union between 1397 and 1523, and Norway was in a Union with Denmark between 1524 and 1814. Norway and Sweden were in a Union between 1804 and 1905. Finland was part of Sweden for almost 700 years from around 1150 until the Finnish War of 1809, after which Finland became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire as the Grand Duchy of Finland. Finland gained independence in 1917. Swedish is one of its official languages, as part of its population speaks Swedish.

During the Second World War, Sweden remained neutral, Finland supported Germany (as protection against the Soviet Union), and Norway and Denmark were occupied by Germany, whereas Iceland and the Faroe Islands were under Allied occupation. At the end of the war Denmark, Iceland and Norway decided to join NATO. Sweden and Finland wanted to retain some neutrality; although they did not join NATO they have cooperated with NATO in the Partnership for Peace arrangement and have participated in several NATO exercises and operations. In response to the Russian war on Ukraine that started on 24 February 2022, both Finland and Sweden submitted their applications to join NATO on 18 May 2022. If their applications are accepted, all the Nordic states will in future rely on, and will be obliged to contribute to, the NATO alliance for their security (Andersen et al., 2021).

All the Nordic countries are either members of the EU or – as regards Iceland and Norway – members of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the Schengen Agreement (including its common visa policy). This represents an important shared political, historic, cultural, economic and normative identity. In the context of this report, Denmark, Finland and Sweden are thus also part of the African–European (AU–EU) strategic partnership, and their Nordic–Africa and European–African relations require close coordination.

### **Roots of the ‘Special’ African–Nordic Relationship**

Denmark, Norway and Sweden have a shared history of support to the liberation efforts of several countries in Southern Africa from colonial and white minority rule. This commitment, dating back to the 1960s, has consisted of political support and material aid to liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, and to support to the frontline states and later SADCC/SADC. This support has continued to inform Nordic–Africa relations.

The USA and some European powers have tended to view African liberation efforts from a Cold War perspective – the West vs the Soviet Union, liberal capitalism vs communism. By contrast, the Nordic countries have recognised these liberation struggles in the context of self-determination as movements for independence from colonialism and for freedom from racism (Hammerstad, 2012). Among Western countries, the position adopted by the Nordic countries remains unique and partly explains the ‘special relationship’ between African and Nordic countries. Unlike other European states, the Nordic countries have actively supported, engaged in, and collaborated with liberation movements at the time condemned by other Western countries for being pawns and puppets in a Soviet strategy of expansion. Nordic support extended as far as risking discord within the NATO alliance by providing support to, for example, Mozambique’s liberation movement at the expense of Portugal, a fellow member of NATO.

### **Position in a changing global order**

Since the end of the Second World War, the Nordic states have, to varying degrees, been deeply integrated into the US-led liberal international order that champions security cooperation, economic openness, the promotion of democratic and human rights norms, and institutional binding (Deudney and Ikenberry, 1999; Ikenberry, 2018). For the Nordic states, the USA has been the chief and undisputed provider of economic, military, and social goods (Andersen et al., 2021). As such, the Nordic states have sought predictable strategic partnerships for the past 80 years, in the quest for a stable global order based on the principles enumerated above.

The Nordic countries are also interwoven in several ways. Nordic governments and politicians promote cooperation in the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic countries also cooperate and coordinate closely at the UN, as shown for instance by the rotating applications for a seat in the Security Council (Laatikainen, 2003). Further, the NORDEFSCO cooperation format has contributed to strengthening defence cooperation in the Nordic region in the past 10–15 years, and several bi- and multilateral defence agreements have been signed recently (Bengtsson, 2020).

The Nordic states support the rules-based multilateral system that has served these countries well since the end of the Second World War. They are strong defenders and supporters of the UN system and other aspects of the international system that generate a predictable and equitable rules-based system for managing international relations in areas such as international trade and telecommunications, as well as for managing common spaces like the high seas and outer space.

As relatively small states, the Nordic countries are seen as having an interest in a world governed by rules, where rules matter more than sheer power. It is general held that, in the international relations of small states, legal rules and binding institutions that regulate inter-state relationships also contribute to more predictable state behaviour (Keohane and Nye, 1977; Abbot et al., 2000). Also important for small, liberal democratic states like the Nordics are maintaining and following rules, and the institutionalisation of power politics. Over the past decade, especially in light of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Nordic states have been increasingly critical to and concerned about Moscow's foreign and security policy. Individually, the Nordic states have also sought to carve out a pragmatic path in their relations with China, balancing bilateral economic, political and people-to-people relations with concerns about China's domestic governance, regional dominance and risks related to its role in the international economy, especially in the context of the resilience of global supply chains and over-reliance on Chinese manufacturing.

With the global order shifting and the multilateral system coming under pressure, the Nordic countries, as core members and beneficiaries of the US-led unipolar order, are adapting by trying to preserve and strengthen the normative and rules-based multilateral foundations of that order, inter alia by cooperating with each other and other like-minded states to defend and support a rules-based multilateral system, with the UN at its core (see Haugevik et al., 2002).

### **Nordic strategic partnership priorities**

Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it was becoming clear that there were converging security perceptions and interests among the Nordic countries (Haugevik et al., 2022). The full consequences of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine remain uncertain, but the invasion has certainly contributed to a convergence and consolidation in thinking about security relations and the global order among the Nordic states. Arguably, all five Nordic states now see the USA as their primary security guarantor (Solli and Solvang, 2022). Finland and Sweden have now submitted coordinated applications to join NATO; despite some issues raised by Turkey, they are likely to become members in the near future.

As the Nordic states are closely integrated and are generally seeking even closer relations, and as the USA has become a less-predictable partner since the Trump presidency, the EU has emerged as an increasingly important strategic partner. Norway has continued to deepen its relationship with the EU, most recently with a governmental initiative for a strategic partnership with the EU on the European Green Deal (Falnes and De Rosa, 2022). Moreover, because of the Russian war on Ukraine, Norway may experience another debate on its future relations with the EU and possible membership (Aftenposten, 2022).

In addition to the importance of the USA, NATO and the EU for the Nordic countries, also bilateral relations with major European powers are being prioritised across the region, in particular with France, Germany and the UK. All the Nordic countries have followed the UK's decision to leave the EU with concern, and have made efforts to establish new relations in a range of areas, in order to limit the negative consequences of Brexit.

In sum, as a result of the pressures which the changing global order has placed on the multilateral system – in particular, with the Russian war on Ukraine – the Nordic states are now more united than

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In sum, as a result of the pressures which the changing global order has placed on the multilateral system – in particular, with the Russian war on Ukraine – the Nordic states are now more united than

before. Given their geographical proximity to Russia, with Finland and Norway having direct borders with Russia, the Nordic states are now feeling that the peace, stability and prosperity the region has enjoyed as an integral member of the liberal international order is increasingly at risk. In response, they are attempting to defend the core strengths of a rules-based multilateral system by promoting democracy, freedoms and human rights, as well as supporting an open but rules-based global economy and a UN-centred system of global governance and cooperation. Further, the Nordic states are hedging their bets on security and global stability, through strong bilateral relations with the USA, strategic partnerships with NATO and the EU, and good relations with China and other emerging and regional powers.

# PART TWO

## AFRICA'S STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

In this part of the report, we examine Africa's strategic partnerships with China, Europe, India, the Nordic region, Russia and Turkey. The aim is to situate the analysis of Africa–Nordic relations within the broader context of Africa's other strategic partnerships, some of which are of a much larger scope, whereas others are more comparable to that of the Africa–Nordic relationship.

The African Union (AU), as the continental body, coordinates some of Africa's strategic partnerships. According to the AU, Africa's strategic partnerships has taken four distinct forms:

- Continent-to-continent partnerships, like the Africa–Europe, Africa–South America, and Africa–Asia relationships. Of these, the Africa–Europe or AU–EU relationship has been the most comprehensive and institutionalised, with a formal partnership agreement, regular summits and other meetings and processes. There is also significant financial support from the EU to the AU and its programmes.
- Continent-to-country partnerships, e.g., Africa–India, Africa–Turkey, Africa–China, Africa–Japan, Africa–USA and Africa–France.
- Partnerships that are added as new states or regions request additional partnerships. This category includes partnerships-in-gestation, such as the Afro–Arab and the Afro–Caribbean partnership, where the basis has been laid and are now in the process of re-conceptualisation; as well as prospective partnership, such as Iran–Africa partnership that requires virtual integration within the framework of existing relationships as a rationale for its eventual establishment.
- And fourthly: partnerships like those that the AU has with other institutions, such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) the Commonwealth and La Francophonie (African Union, 2022).

The Africa–Europe relationship falls into the continent-to-continent category, whereas the AU's relationships with China, India, Russia and Turkey fall in the continent-to-country category. However, the African–Nordic relationship does not fit into any of these categories, and is not coordinated via the African Union. The Africa–Nordic relationship is more of a country-to-country relationship, involving the five Nordic countries and a select number of African countries.

## AFRICA–CHINA RELATIONS

*Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Jordan Mc Lean, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)*

The relationship between Africa and China has received considerable coverage over the past 20 years. The scope, resources involved and institutional platforms have been significant compared to those of other (re)emerging external powers in Africa. In parts of the West, there has been suspicion of Chinese motives, and the possible impact on good governance, democracy and human rights in African countries. China's geopolitical status as a nascent superpower has also been an important factor in the way in which its engagements has been perceived by many actors.

### History and institutional nature of the Africa–China relationship

Communist China's links with Africa date back to the early post-Second World War era of the anti-colonial struggle and the 1955 Bandung Asian–African Conference, which led to the formation

of the Non-Aligned Movement and which was based in part on China's Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. China has always emphasised that it is a developing country and that it is driven by the principles of South–South solidarity, mutual benefit and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. It has also constantly expressed appreciation for the support it received from African states at the UN as regards replacing Taiwan, which until 1973 had been the Permanent Member of the Security Council representing the Republic of China.

During the Cold War, China supported many anti-colonial struggles in Africa. After Deng Xiaoping's reforms from 1978 onwards, the Chinese economy began to open up and grow, which necessitated diversifying its sources of energy, as well as access to other resources. This led to the establishment of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, marking the 'culmination of China's regional diplomacy' in Africa, and a platform for deepening Africa–China economic and political cooperation (Alden, 2007: 30). This began as a ministerial meeting; the first FOCAC Summit was held in 2006 in Beijing. However, not all subsequent meetings have been summits. FOCAC is a tri-annual dialogue, with the most recent ministerial meeting held in Dakar in November 2021.

There are three levels of FOCAC follow-up mechanisms: the Ministerial Conference is held every three years (sometimes arranged as a summit); the follow-up meetings of senior officials and the preparatory meetings of senior officials prior to the ministerial conferences are held, respectively, in the year and a few days before a ministerial conference is held; consultations between the African diplomatic corps in China and the secretariat of the Chinese follow-up committee are held at least twice a year. Ministerial conferences and meetings of senior officials are held alternately in China and the African country which is co-chair for the period. The Chinese follow-up committee of FOCAC currently has 33 member departments or agencies. (Forum on China–Africa Cooperation, 2022)

FOCAC has also established a range of sub-forums: the China–Africa People's Forum, China–Africa Young Leaders Forum, Ministerial Forum on China–Africa Health Cooperation, Forum on China–Africa Media Cooperation, China–Africa Poverty Reduction and Development Conference, FOCAC–Legal Forum, Forum on China–Africa Local Government Cooperation, and China–Africa Think Tanks Forum. The sub-forums have a dual role. Firstly, the commitments announced at FOCAC are devolved into specific projects through these sub-forums; secondly, the sub-forums ensure full engagement between African countries and their Chinese counterparts. Through the sub-forum structure, pragmatic implementation is linked with the development of people-to-people diplomatic relationships. The sub-forums provide a formalised platform for building consensus on how to implement FOCAC projects in Africa. The roots of the sub-forum mechanism are found within the internal structure and decision-making process of the Chinese Communist Party – a top-to-bottom cascading approach.

China's relations with African countries unfold mainly on the bilateral level, not through the FOCAC platform. However, FOCAC facilitates high-level diplomacy, and also serves as a forum where Africans and Chinese can work out a shared agenda. The FOCAC agenda has been expanded to include issues like peacekeeping, curbing wildlife crime and African industrialisation. The FOCAC process is an example of China's multi-bilateral approach to its relations with Africa. China has been criticised in the past for its focus on state-to-state bilateral agreements, with limited regional engagement (Alden and Wu, 2017). However, in 2010 the African Union was made a full member of FOCAC, although the impact of this on Chinese development assistance to Africa's regional organisations is unclear.

### Scope of Cooperation

Relations between Africa and China cover many aspects, varying from country to country. After starting primarily in the economic/developmental and diplomatic realms, relations now include peace and security elements. At the first two FOCAC meetings, China declared its relations with Africa to be 'free of



political conditionality and serving the interests of Africa and China'. It also warned against the rise of Western hegemony in global affairs.<sup>2</sup> This dimension is an important part in the cooperation between Africa and China. The sole political conditionality involved is that states recognise the 'one-China policy'. China has made significant inroads in reducing the number of African states that recognise Taiwan: today only Eswatini (formerly known as Swaziland) retains ties to Taiwan.

Cooperation between Africa and China has included trade, extractives, infrastructure, agricultural support, investment in certain light industrial manufacturing sectors such as textiles or shoes, and capacity building.

Bilateral trade reached USD254 billion in 2021 – up 35% from the previous year, which had been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. The increase was driven by the growth in Chinese exports to the continent (Mureithi, 2022). Overall, China exports more to Africa than it imports, with some country-to-country variations. Over the last decade and a half, China has also cooperated with African governments in establishing seven Special Economic Zones as part of its 'Going Global' trade initiative; however, the impact on manufacturing and jobs has not been significant (China Internet Information Centre, 2001). In 2009, China overtook the USA as Africa's single largest trading partner (although, as a trading bloc, the EU is Africa's biggest trading partner) – a position unlikely to change soon despite recent fluctuations in the Sino–African trade and investment relationship.

In 2019, China signed a free trade area agreement with Mauritius, its first such agreement with an African country. In December 2021, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce issued the first mid-to-long-term vision for Sino–African cooperation: the China–Africa Cooperation Vision 2035 (Chinese Ministry of Commerce, 2021). In this Vision, China commits to invest another USD60 billion in Africa by 2035, especially in support of African agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, environmental protection, digital economy, and the blue economy. China–Africa annual trade is expected to reach USD300 billion in 2035.

Also included in the Vision 2035 are re-commitments to strengthening Sino–African cooperation in infrastructure development under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), expansion of two-way investment, science and technology development, and green economy development. Further, Vision 2035 pledges to deepen media cooperation and tourism development. Peace and security are highlighted as areas for greater Sino–African cooperation.

## Financing

China's financing to Africa is driven largely by its policy banks. During the Cold War, much Chinese assistance to Africa was project-based, handled through government ministries. Since the 1990s, the Export–Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank have become major funding vehicles.

China's financial support is underpinned by the principle of win–win, or mutual benefit. China provides more loans than grants. Additionally, Chinese financing is tied: Chinese contractors are employed to implement the project. In 2019, the Belt and Road Africa Fund was launched with USD1 billion in financing, intended to promote BRI-related projects in Africa.

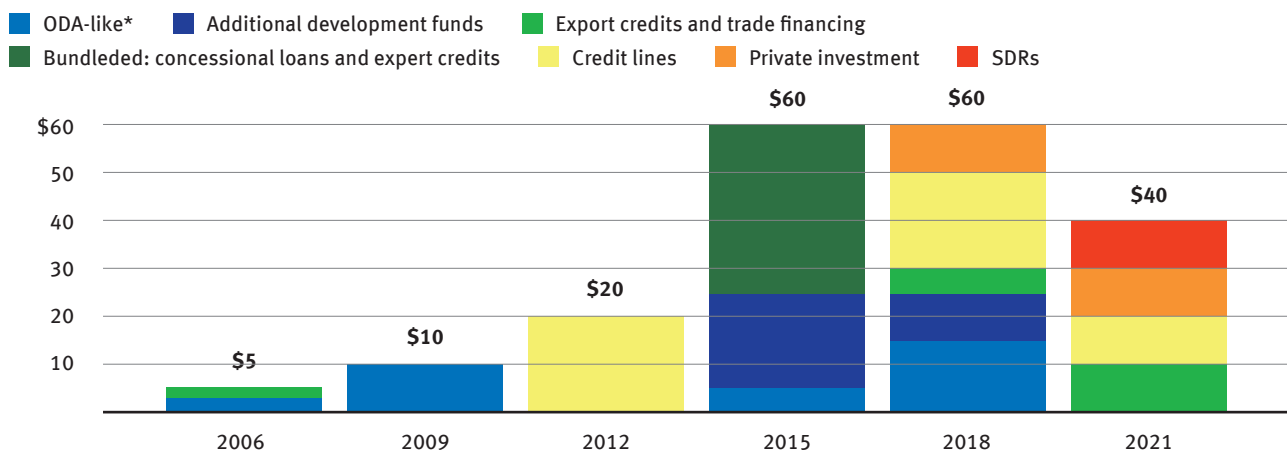
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<sup>2</sup> See USC US-China Institute. (2022) Consolidating China-Africa Traditional Friendship and Deepening China-Africa All-Round Cooperation, February 4, 2004 – Speech by President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China at Joint Session of the Gabonese Parliament (Feb, 4, 2004), [online]. Available at: <https://china.usc.edu/consolidating-china-africa-traditional-friendship-and-deepening-china-africa-all-round-cooperation> [accessed 27 March 2022] and China.org.cn, Beijing Declaration on the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation [online], Available at: <http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/focac/185148.htm> [accessed 19 April 2022]

**Figure 5. China’s FOCAC pledges (2006-2021)** (Source: Centre for Global Development.)

### China’s FOCAC Pledges

\$US, billions



\*ODA-like pledges group together grants, interest-free loans, and concessional loans. The grant-equivalent of these commitments is unknown. Various commitments to special development-related funds, such as the China-Africa Development Fund are included separately, as their concessionality is unclear.

No new financial pledges were announced at the first two FOCAC meetings in 2000 and 2003.

Chart: Center for Global Development · Created with Datawrapper

Chinese investment in Africa in 2020 amounted to some \$4.23 billion, mainly to Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Ethiopia and Nigeria (SAIS China–Africa Research Initiative, 2020a). Definitive figures for Chinese aid to Africa are difficult to obtain, but between 2013 and 2018 it is estimated that some 45% of the total of \$16.67 billion went to Africa (SAIA China–Africa Research Initiative, 2020b).

It is important to stress that this relationship is not one dictated by China alone. African countries have seen the opportunities presented by China as enabling them to diversify their economic and development partnerships, which had been linked mainly to the West. China’s significant economic rise also acted as an inspirational example – a developing economy that had managed to transcend its poverty and underdevelopment in only a few decades. With China still classified as developing economy, there were lessons that African countries could learn from its success. Moreover, there are many Chinese actors engaged in Africa – from the central government to the policy banks, provinces, state-owned enterprises, private companies and individuals.

**Table 4. Africa-China relations in a nutshell**

African Students in China (2018)	African embassies in China	Chinese Embassies in Africa	Total Arms Sales to Africa (2021)	Chinese aid to Africa	Chinese investment flows to Africa (2020)
81562	44 (plus AU Mission)	53	549 million	Calculate; 45 % of the total of \$16.67 billion	US\$4.23 billion



### **Africa -China Partnership**

China is the single largest country trading partner with Africa. Its engagement with Africa through the FOCAC mechanism involves three levels:

- Ministerial conferences are held every three years (sometimes held at summit level).
- The follow-up meetings of senior officials and the preparatory meetings of senior officials for the ministerial conference are held, respectively, in the year of and a few days before the ministerial conference is held.
- Consultations between the African diplomatic corps in China and the secretariat of the Chinese follow-up committee are held at least twice a year. The ministerial conferences and the meeting of senior officials are held alternately in China and the African country that is co-chairing at the time. The Chinese follow-up committee of FOCAC currently has 33 member departments or agencies.

### **Unique features of engagement**

- China's relations with Africa tend to be on the bilateral level. This approach allows China and the partner African country to determine agreements outside of the FOCAC forum as well.
- The main value of FOCAC lies in its ability to facilitate high-level diplomacy, exemplifying China's multi-bilateral approach to its relations with Africa.

## **AFRICA–EU RELATIONS**

*Faith Mabera, Senior Researcher, Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)*

The history of Africa–Europe inter-regional relations goes back to 2000, when the first Africa–European Union (EU) Summit was held in Cairo. The launch of the 2007 Joint Africa–EU Strategy served as the basis for the overarching political framework of relations between Africa and the EU. Since then, Africa–EU relations have seen institutional and organisational re-ordering in line with the evolving priorities and interests in the setting of a global order in transition.

In the two-decades history of Africa–EU relations, both sides have undergone individual transformations that have had a bearing on the direction of the partnership. For instance, since its launch in 2002, the AU has reshaped its organisational frameworks and adopted policies that underpin its positioning as the interlocutor for Africa and the African people in the global arena. Major strides include the creation of the African Peace and Security Architecture in 2002, the adoption of AU Agenda 2063 in 2013, and the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2018, with entry into force in May 2019.

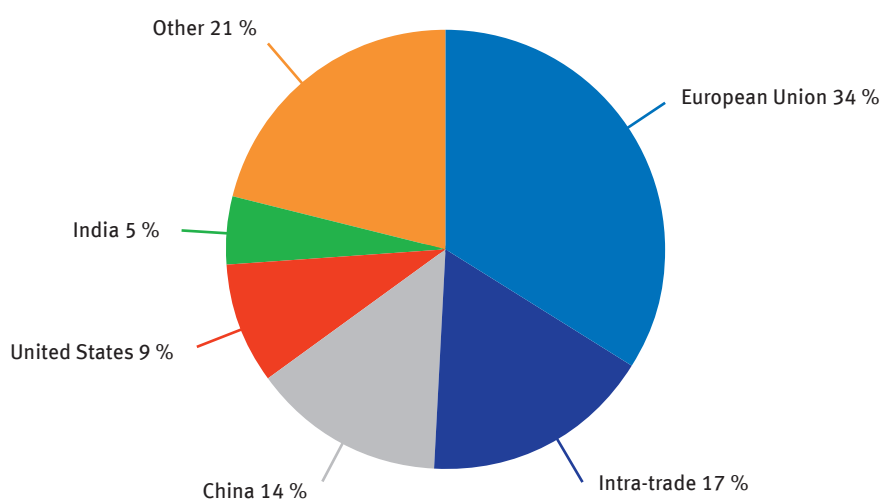
In 2016, the EU promulgated its new Global Strategy, viewed as a move to consolidate its profile as a geopolitical actor while also adding coherence and flexibility to the structure and financing of its external actions. Additionally, in 2021, the EU unveiled the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), the new jumbo financing instrument for its external action, with three pillars: geographic, thematic and rapid response (European Commission 2021a).

Apart from triennial summits at the level of heads of states and government, AU–EU institutional links have included ministerial meetings, annual commission-to-commission meetings and inter-parliamentary engagements. There have also been regular engagements among other stakeholders, such as youth, civil society, local governments, private sector and business.

### EU–AU trade and development partnership

The EU is Africa’s biggest trading partner in terms of overall trade volumes in exports and imports. In 2020, its share represented 34% of Africa’s trade, followed by China, which accounted for 14%, and the USA, with 9%.

**Figure 6. Africa’s trade partners (Statista 2019)** (Sources: AUC, OECD)



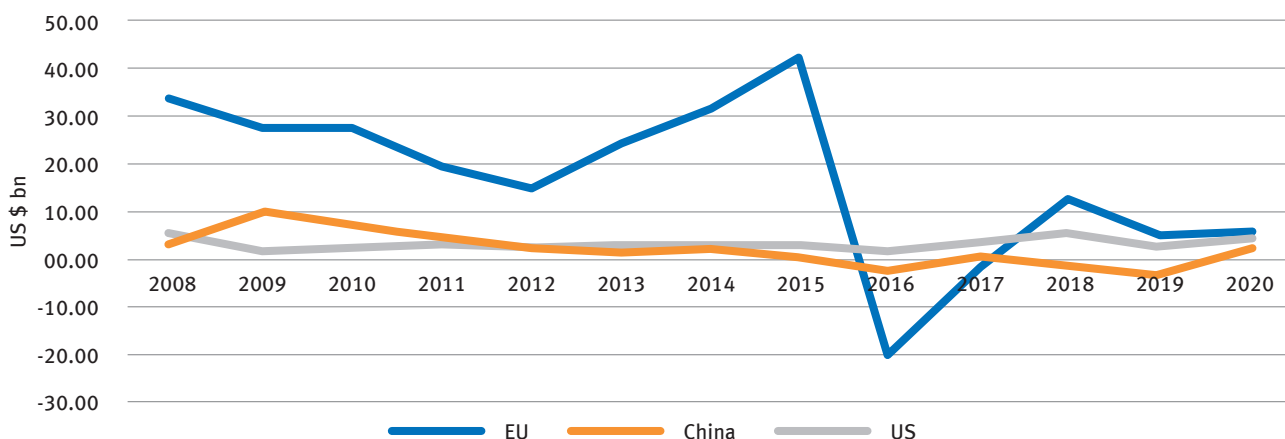
Additional information: Africa; AUC; OECD; 2019

EU–Africa trade relations have been facilitated through the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) (valid 2000–2020), which served as the overarching policy framework for trade and development cooperation between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group. In April 2021, a Post-Cotonou Agreement/ new Partnership Agreement was signed between the EU and members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), formerly known as the ACP Group of States. The new agreement features an enhanced regional focus and governance structure, and is expected to expand the scope and scale of the EU’s and OACPS’s ambitions to better address current and future challenges (European Commission, 2021b).

As a region, the EU also tops foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in Africa (representing 40% of total FDI inflows), amounting to €222 billion in 2020. Relative to their economic weight in the global economy, FDI inflows to Africa have remained marginal and are predominantly resource-seeking, reinforcing commodity-dependent export profiles. According to a United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 2005 report, FDI flows to Africa have been largely delinked from the domestic economy, with priority accorded to resource extraction at the possible expense of domestic manufacturing interests, thereby undermining much-needed diversification strategies.

**Figure 7. Comparison of China, EU and United States Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows to Africa, 2008-2020** (Sources: Eurostat, Johns Hopkins China-Africa Research Initiative)

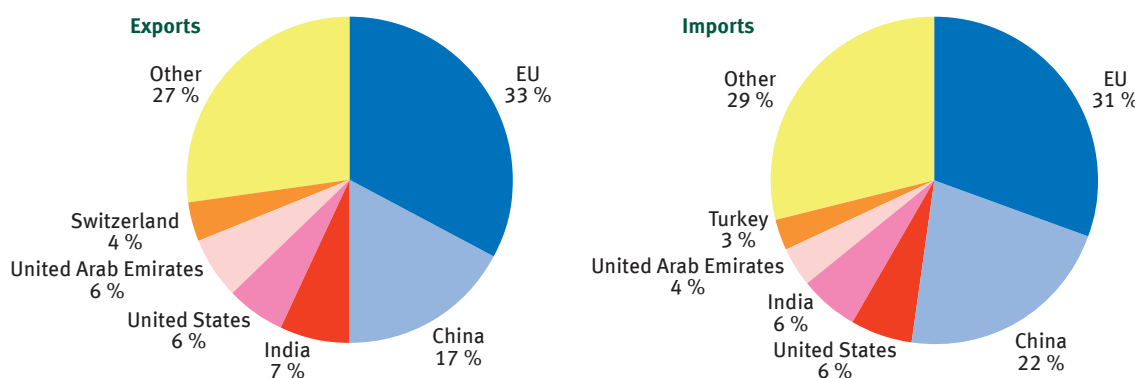
**Comparison of China, EU and US FDI flows to Africa, 2008-2020**



The EU is the largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa, collectively providing US \$76.1 billion in 2020, equivalent to 46% of overall global ODA.

Despite these figures which make a strong case for the EU’s collective position as Africa’s top partner (European Commission 2021c), closer examination of trends between 2000 and 2019 reveals several dynamics in EU–Africa relations. For instance, compared to 2000 – when 38 African countries had Europe as their top export market, and 30 had Europe as their main source of imported products – in 2019, 17 African countries had Europe as their top export market and 10 had Europe as main source of imports. During the same period, the surge of Chinese FDI into Africa, as well as increased trade volumes, indicates a degree of stagnation in the EU’s economic relations with Africa. On the other hand, trends also point to Africa’s increased geostrategic appeal to a broad range of external partners who have capitalised on new-found opportunities to form strategic partnerships, in view of the positive outlook for Africa’s overall economic trajectory. With many external actors now engaging in trade, investment and development partnerships with Africa, the continent has access to an array of partners with various comparative advantages.

**Figure 8. African export and import shares with main partners, 2020** (Source: UNCTAD)



## The 2022 AU–EU Summit: key highlights

The sixth AU–EU Summit, held in Brussels 17–18 February 2022, has been the subject of much debate – especially concerning the trajectory of the partnership and its evolution in light of broader geopolitical dynamics, and the growing focus on strategic competition with other external actors with myriad interests in Africa. The main highlight from the 2022 Summit was the launch of the Global Gateway, a €150 billion invest package for funding priority areas such as the green transition, health, education, sustainable growth and job creation (European Commission 2021d). Financing for the Global Gateway will draw on a mix of European financial and development-finance institutions and grants from EU external assistance programmes. The European Commission has promoted the Global Gateway as a template of the European model for forging resilient links with strategic partners: however, some commentators view it as a counterweight to China’s \$1.3 trillion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aimed at connecting Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks, while also promoting economic growth, strengthening trade and infrastructure development across partner countries (Kebret, 2021).

Beyond the prism of geopolitical rivalry, some view the Global Gateway as a recalibration of the EU’s partnership with Africa and a break with the pattern of creating dependencies. The Global Gateway is also indicative of strategic policy shifts in Brussels, aimed at injecting coherence into the EU’s external actions while leveraging the collective advantages of the Team Europe approach in scaling up competitiveness and aligning investment packages with a joint list of priorities and strategic goals.

As with previous summits, the 2022 AU–EU Brussels Summit declarations from both sides echoed the mantra of renewed and deep partnership, shared values, equality between partners and reciprocal commitments. Drawing on discussions at the 2017 AU–EU Summit in Abidjan, the EU announced a new comprehensive strategy with Africa in 2020, outlining five priority areas for the Africa–EU partnership: green transition and energy access; digital transformation; sustainable growth and jobs; peace and governance; and migration and mobility. This 2020 Comprehensive Strategy was also seen as a successor to the 2017 Joint Africa–EU Strategy (JAES), in keeping with the changing realities and emerging challenges that demand renewal of the partnership (European Commission, 2020). However, deeper questions have been asked beyond the headlines and handshakes – whether the recently unveiled Comprehensive Strategy actually reflects African priorities, or simply continues to reinforce uni-directional patterns of agenda-setting and paternalistic modes of engagement. In the latest iteration of the EU’s strategy towards Africa, the focus seems to be on migration and climate change, whereas for the AU, core priorities have concerned a waiver for local manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines and closer alignment between the EU’s strategy and African economic frameworks such as AU Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area. There have also been stronger calls for recognition of African agency in leveraging strategic partnerships for the benefit of African needs and priority areas, such as peace and security, infrastructure and energy, climate change, innovative development financing, training youth, and women’s empowerment (Duggan et al., 2022).

**Table 5. Africa-EU relations in a nutshell**

African Students in EU tertiary institutions (2019) <sup>iii</sup>	EU delegations in Africa	Chinese Embassies in Africa	Total Arms Sales to Africa (2021) <sup>b</sup>	Chinese aid to Africa	Chinese investment flows to Africa (2020) <sup>c</sup>
197 047	46	€2.7 billion	€600 million	€ 4.84 billion	2021: €146 billion  2021: €142 billion



### **Africa-EU Partnership**

One of oldest strategic partnerships, it is held at summit level triennially. It remains important, as the EU is the largest trading bloc of the strategic partnerships reviewed in this report. Whereas the EU's strategy towards Africa focuses on migration and climate change, the AU's core priorities have demanded waivers for the local manufacture of Covid-19 vaccines and closer alignment between the EU's strategy and African economic frameworks such as AU Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area.

#### **Unique features of engagement**

- Africa–EU institutional engagement links are multi-level, and include the hosting of ministerial meetings, annual commission-to-commission meetings and inter-parliamentary engagements.
- In addition, there have been regular activities involving stakeholders such as youth, civil society, local governments, the private sector and business. These various levels of engagement help to strengthen the partnership as it develops.

## **AFRICA–INDIA RELATIONS**

*Arina Muresan, Senior Researcher, Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)*

### **Bi-lateral and multi-lateral relations**

Like Africa, India has a history of anti-colonial movements; moreover, Africa is home to a sizable Indian diaspora. Over the years, India has maintained its role as an important economic and political partner for Africa. From 2018 to 2021, India fast-tracked the opening of 18 new missions across Africa (Viswanathan and Mishra, 2019: 5); its diplomatic representation in African countries has grown to include 48 diplomatic missions (25 embassies, 18 high commissions and 4 honorary consuls/consuls general) across the continent, with further engagement at the African Union (AU), AU Commission, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) ((Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2022a). Additional multilateral engagements include the triennial India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS), which includes heads of state who attend the five-day summit with preceding bilateral consultations. At the most recent AFS in 2018, the IAFS took major strides, announcing the Duty-Free Tariff Preference Scheme for Least Developed Countries, scholarships for African students, credit line, and maritime security in the Indian Ocean region.

### **India as Africa's development partner**

Although India is a recipient country itself, Africa has viewed it as a development partner. Much of this engagement is driven by South–South cooperation principles, and has grown to encompass commercial engagements in agriculture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, ICT services. These are carried out through multiple instruments including grant-in-aid, line of credit and capacity building and technical assistance, and are specifically oriented to the needs of the partner country (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2022b).

Although the values driving India’s engagement in Africa are ‘based on demand and a partnership among equals, India’s development cooperation has been criticised for lacking a clear strategy (Chakrabarty 2021). However, the Indian government has formulated consistent and broad encapsulating policies. For example, the document ‘The Ten Guiding Principles for India–Africa Engagement: Finding Coherence in India’s Africa Policy’ notes the continuity in how India has engaged Africa over the years, with foreign-policy values that espouse solidarity and development. However, it does not necessarily show how India relates this to its national and geostrategic priorities in its immediate region (Viswanathan and Mishra, 2019: 1–2). India has diverse relationships that play to various strengths, but it has been recommended that these be more clearly directly through a trade agenda that acknowledges the need to build Indian international value chains and attract more investment, while circumventing global trends of trade protectionism (Harper, 2022).

### Trade and investment relations

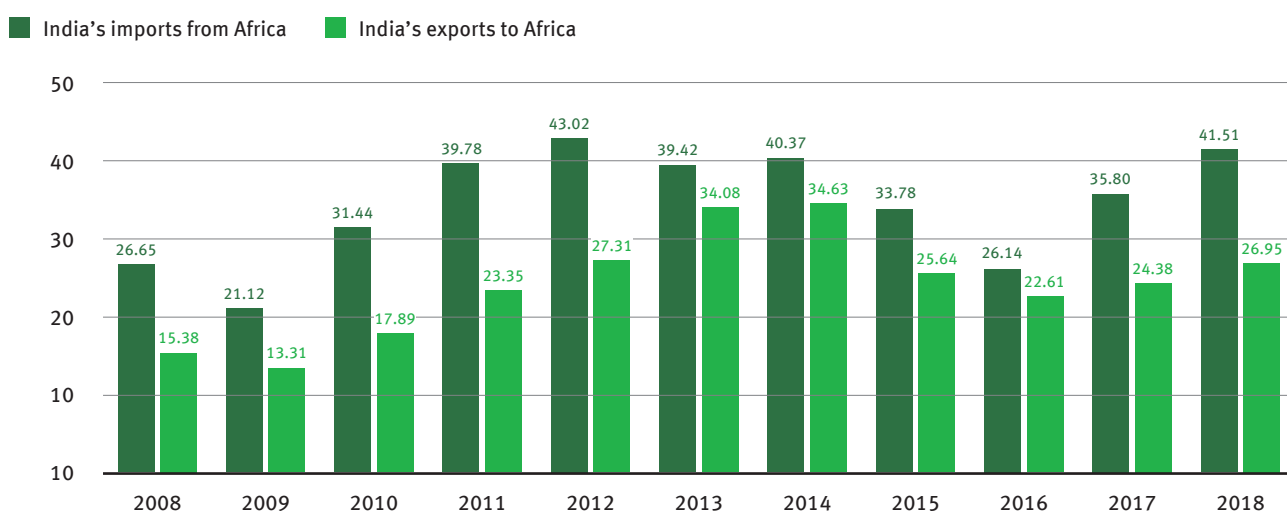
India has become a major player in Africa. For 2020–2021, India’s foreign trade with Africa amounted to US\$ 22.93bn for exports, and US\$ 23.89bn for imports (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, 2022).

Over the years, India has maintained a healthy trade relationship with African countries, which has ensured that India’s imports from Africa are higher than its exports to the continent. India’s engagement is frequently contrasted to China’s presence in the region. Although India’s imports and exports are dwarfed by those of China, it is not necessarily India’s intent to compete with China here, because it cannot match China’s spending. India may be able to raise its profile through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), because of the overall distributional effects. Historically, however, India’s international investment has been concentrated in Asia and the Middle East (India Briefing, 2021).

**Figure 9. India-Africa Trade, 2008-18 (US\$ Billion)**  
 (Source: India-Africa Trade and Investment Cooperation for Economic Development)

### India-Africa Trade, 2008-18 (US\$ Billion)

\$US, billions





**Table 6. India's Investment in African Countries, 2010-17 (US\$ Billion)***(Source: India-Africa Trade and Investment Cooperation for Economic Development)*

India's Investment in African Countries, 2010-17 (US\$ Billion)								
Investment	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2014	2015	2016
India's Investment in Africa	11.89	16.38	23.64	13.82	15.10	18.18	11.58	13.31
India's Investment in the world	71.32	78.54	93.41	90.16	89.01	90.78	72.51	81.35
Share of investment in Africa out of India's total outbound investment	16.67	20.86	25.31	15.33	16.97	20.02	15.97	16.36

Foreign direct investment to Africa accounted for 15% of India's FDI engagement, with trade increasing from \$51.7bn (R818bn) in 2010–2011 to \$66.7bn in 2019 to 2020; and more recently, India has committed to deliver 670 million doses of the Serum Institute's Covid-19 vaccine (Karingi and Naliaka, 2022; Kassen, 2021). In addition, India ranked 7th in the world, creating an annual average of 4,165 jobs from 2010–2019, behind China (18,562), US (12,106), France (7,763), Turkey (5,047), UK (5,063), and Germany (4,933) (Swiss–African Business Circle, 2021).

The focus of India's economic diplomacy regarding Africa has been on providing: 1) grants geared to launching a Pan-African e-Network to support an African fibre-optic network at the AU, further education and medical capacity building; 2) technical assistance in the form of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme and its sister programme the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP), which has specialised in training and technical assistance; and 3) making lines of credit available that are geared towards developing agriculture and energy infrastructure projects (Lucey et al., 2015: 2–3).

### Sectors to watch

In addition to developments in economic and political relations, sectors to watch are immigration issues and India's global governance aspirations. India's pioneering e-visa portal for electronic visa application speaks volumes of India's aim of integrating the Fourth Industrial Revolution and digitising government services. African migration issues are becoming increasingly relevant in global debates and people-to-people exchanges are vital for promoting relationships. A potential area here is the governing visa regime as well as such areas business, leisure travel and academic migration. In 2019, India's share of African tourism grew from 5.4% in 2010 to 15.4% (Karingi and Naliaka, 2022). Academic migration holds a unique potential because of value communication and dissemination. Forums that dovetail with the annual ministerial-level India–Africa Forum Summit include the India–Africa Higher Education and Skill Development Summit, for discussion of issues like access and curriculum, while linking this to training and/or learning opportunities with companies. In 2019, approximately 25,000 African students were registered in India, and the Indian government has an ambitious 'Study in India' campaign aimed at attracting 200,000 students by 2023. However, African students face the challenges of racism and anti-African sentiments, which have fuelled negative perceptions of the living and studying environment, and entailed scant cultural assimilation for African students and even less positive communication back to their country of origin (Mohapatra, 2019).

### Geostrategic orientations

India hopes for more coordinated responses on other multilateral forums, such as participation in the UN Security Council and the World Trade Organisation, as well as core issues like climate action, health-related measures (the Covid-19 pandemic in particular), the annual Indian Ocean

Rim Association (IORA) with its orientation to the blue economy, and consistent involvement in security commitments like Blue Helmet missions, anti-terrorism and maritime security, as well as training. In this context, Africa is set to play a unique role, as global power centres, driven by political, technological and economic developments, are shifting from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. In today's hyper-globalised reality, countries have prioritised their own growth over the competition of global power contests like between China and the US, and more recently, Russia and the West. All will continue to play a prominent role, so India will seek to manoeuvre within this geostrategic re-conceptualisation to achieve its own great-power potential (Harper, 2022).

**Table 7. India-Africa relations in a nutshell**

African Students in India	African Embassies/ High Commissions and Charge d'affaires in India	Indian Embassies/ High Commissions and Consul Generals in Africa	Military bases in Africa	Africa-India FDI
25 000	46	47	Madagascar and Seychelles	US\$66.7bn



### Africa-India Partnership

This partnership involves triennial summit meetings, with the heads of state attending a five-day summit, preceded by bilateral consultations. India has played a key role during the Covid-19 pandemic, committing 670 million doses of the Serum Institute vaccine to Africa when the continent was struggling to acquire much-needed vaccines because of vaccine hoarding.

### Unique features of engagement

- As part of its engagement strategy, India has offered scholarships for African students under the 'Study in India' campaign, aimed at attracting 200,000 students by 2023.
- India seeks engagement with a range of relevant African interlocutors, including the AU Commission (AUC), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs). This approach allows India to serve as a multi-level engagement partner.
- South-South cooperation principles have expanded to encompass commercial engagements in agriculture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and ICT services.

## AFRICA–RUSSIA RELATIONS

*Elizabeth Sidiropoulos and Jordan Mc Lean, South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)*

Compared to other major powers in the last 20 years, the Russian Federation is a relative newcomer to Africa, and its (re)entry has given rise to significant concerns in the West. Also in Africa, many civil society actors have expressed concern about certain of Russia's activities, such as the involvement of mercenaries in some African conflicts, notably in the Sahel and Central Africa, including the supply of small arms; and the use of social media to sow doubt and build trust in alternative news sources (not to be confused with 'fake news').

### History and the institutional nature of the relationship

The relationship between Russia and Africa has its historical roots in the Soviet-era support for African anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements. Here, the Soviet interest stemmed as much from its ideological opposition to colonialism as it did from its opposition to continued Western influence on the continent.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia turned to the USA and Europe in the Yeltsin years, seemingly abandoning the relations it had nurtured in Africa during the Cold War. This began to change with President Vladimir Putin's first visit to Africa in 2006, which coincided with Russia paying off its IMF debts and regaining 'financial sovereignty'. This economically pragmatic move was also part of Russia's multi-vector foreign policy, which aspired to the emergence of a multipolar world where the USA was no longer the dominant hegemonic power.

By most indicators, Russia has a much smaller footprint in Africa than most of the other major external actors on the continent, as it has lacked the instruments and the resources of, for instance, China, Japan, the USA or and the EU (Sidiropoulos and Alden, 2019).

It was only very recently that the first Africa–Russia Summit was held, in Sochi in 2019, attended by 43 African heads of state. This was Russia's attempt to highlight the political importance of continent, and to provide a framework for cooperation. Russian involvement in Africa has grown over the past two decades: the 2019 Summit must also be understood as part of Russia's diplomatic, commercial, and military efforts to assert its global role in the face of ongoing sanctions by the West and attempts at sidelining Russia after its annexation of Crimea in 2014. With the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, this motivation is likely to increase in importance.

The Sochi Summit featured repeated references to Soviet support for the continent during the Cold War, and to the interest of parties in developing a multi-polar international order. The Africa–Russia Summit is intended to be triannual, with the next one planned for November 2022, in St. Petersburg.<sup>3</sup>

The Secretariat of the Russia–Africa Partnership Forum is the mechanism responsible for coordinating the summit and organising annual ministerial meetings. The declaration from the first summit (Roscongress Foundation, 2019) also committed to holding annual political consultations between foreign ministers of Russia and the AU troika (the present, former and future presidencies of the African Union) in the period between summits.

As is the case with China, these engagements have remained largely bilateral. However, Russia signed an MoU with the AU Commission in September 2014 which provides the framework for regular interactions between the two parties on economic as well as political matters.

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<sup>3</sup> Originally the summit was planned for Addis Ababa but was moved to St Peterburg because of the political instability in Ethiopia. It is unclear whether the war in Ukraine will lead to a postponement. At the time of writing it was still going ahead.

## Scope of Cooperation

Russia’s interests in Africa have focused largely on new natural resources and markets. China has emphasised development as a core component of its relationship with Africa, but Russia has not focused on this dimension. Its relations with the continent fall into the following categories: commercial relations, arms sales and military cooperation, support to governments to fight insurgents, and public diplomacy.

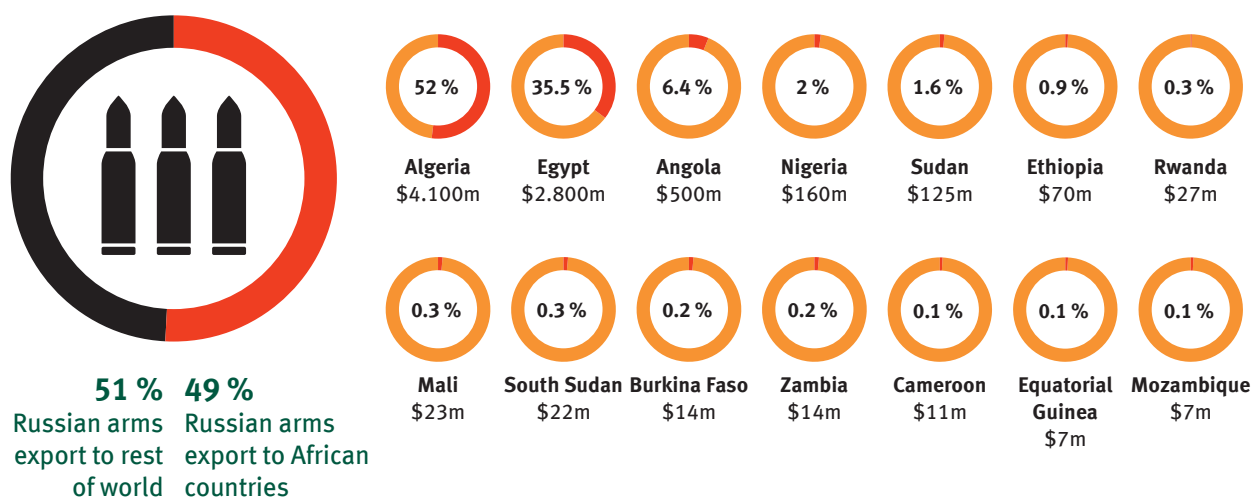
Its commercial relations have focused on enabling Russian companies to extend their resource base by acquiring exploration and production licenses in oil-rich countries or countries that have strategic minerals (Sidiropoulos and Alden, 2019). Russia is also a leading African partner on nuclear power, having signed cooperation agreements with some 16 African countries on nuclear projects. Trade between Africa and Russia remains significantly lower than the continent’s trade with other strategic partners. Total trade between Africa and Russia amounted to \$16.8 billion in 2019, according to Trade Map 2021. President Putin is reported as aiming to double trade by the 2022 Summit (Klomegah, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic saw a drop in bilateral trade to \$14.5 billion in 2020, but in 2021 it recovered to \$17.7 billion (TradeMap, 2021). Overall, Russia had a trade surplus with Africa in 2010 – about 83% of total trade involved Russian exports to Africa.

Ever since the Soviet era, the arms trade has been a key aspect of Russia’s engagement with Africa. Russia is the largest exporter of arms to sub-Saharan Africa, making up 30% of sub-Saharan Africa’s total arms imports for 2016–2020 (SIPRI, 2021). Moreover, Russia has signed some 20 military cooperation agreements with Africa since 2014, after the West imposed the first round of sanctions in the wake of the Russian annexation of Crimea. Russia has also given consideration to opening a base in the Horn of Africa, where China, the USA, France and Japan already have a presence.

**Figure 10: Russia is the largest arm supplier to Africa** (Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database 2021)

### Africa’s Major Importers of Russian Arms (2020)

13 April 2022



A related aspect of Russia’s engagement in Africa concerns the Wagner Group, a private military organisation with links to the Kremlin. It has been active in the Central African Republic, Libya, in Mali and was for a time also present in Mozambique. The activities of the group appear to be financed via extractive industry contracts facilitated by Russia. The presence of these actors gives Russia an undeniable role in supporting these governments to battle insurgencies, while subtly signalling its military strength and potential to project hard power. The Declaration from the first Africa–Russia

Summit mentioned security cooperation before economic cooperation as an aim of intensifying Africa–Russia engagement (Roscongress Foundation, 2019). The Summit Declaration also noted that the two sides would cooperate in the area of international information security and make ‘efforts to consolidate positions and coordinate steps within relevant international fora’.

There is mounting evidence of Russian attempts to manipulate public debates and opinions of Russia by using various media tools. Russian state-owned media outlets create narratives that portray Russia as an ally in Africa outranking traditional partners such as France and the USA (Clifford and Gruzd, 2022). This has been most evident recently in West Africa. Following the August 2020 coup in Mali, supporters carried Russian flags in the streets of Bamako, despite the lack of bilateral and historic relations between the countries. One year earlier, social media sites had placed the blame on France for Islamist extremism in northern Mali, promulgating pro-Russian sentiments through hyper-partisan, polarising content disseminated via the Russian Sputnik and RT networks (Clifford, 2022).

### Financing

Russian financing on the African continent has been limited. In 2017, development cooperation was provided to 13 African countries, primarily Madagascar, Mozambique and Tunisia, and amounted to USD 37.4 million (Knobel and Zaytsev, 2018). According to the OECD–DAC, in 2019 Russian aid to sub-Saharan Africa amounted to only \$30.87 million (OECD–DAC, 2021).

Starting in the early 2000s, Russia’s state development bank, Vnesheconombank (VEB), moved into several African countries. More recently, VEB’s presence has receded, also as a result of sanctions, although the VEB-owned Russian Export Centre became a shareholder of Afreximbank in December 2017. In the same year, the Registrar of Banks in South Africa withdrew its consent to VEB on having a representative office in the country.

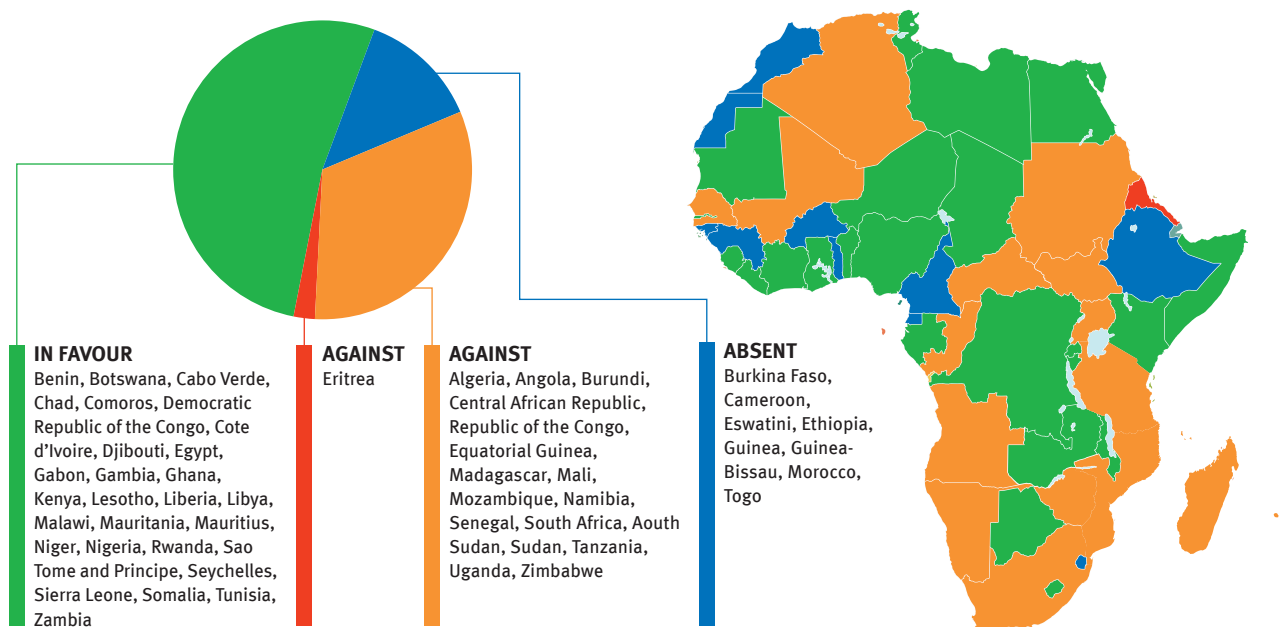
On the side-lines of the first summit, it was announced that Russia’s largest lender, Sberbank, together with the London-based investment firm Gemcorp Capital, VEB, and the Russia Export Centre, were creating a mechanism to support trade finance between Russia and African countries. However, the additional sanctions imposed on Russia as a result of the invasion of Ukraine are likely to reduce Russian financing to Africa significantly.

### Africa, and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine

African responses to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine have differed from country to country, as also shown in voting in the UN General Assembly. While the three African members of the UN Security Council – Gabon, Ghana and Kenya – voted in favour of the resolution condemning Russian actions, in the UN General Assembly vote on 2 March 2022, 28 African countries voted in favour, 17 abstained, 1 (Eritrea) voted against, and 8 countries were not present. In the vote on 7 April to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council, only 10 African states voted in favour, nine voted against, there were 23 abstentions, and 8 countries abstaining. The AU also issued a statement condemning the Russian invasion and called for an immediate ceasefire (African Union Statement, 2022).

**Figure 11. How Africa voted on a 2 March 2022 UNGA resolution condemning Russia’s war on Ukraine** (Source: UN Press, 2 March 2022)

**How Africa voted:**



However, several countries have argued that Russia’s security concerns are legitimate, and that NATO’s desire to expand eastwards forced Russia’s hand. Other reasons cited include the hypocrisy of the West in calling for censure against Russia for actions which are similar to Western actions in Iraq and Libya. The racism experienced by many African students seeking to flee Ukraine in the early days of the war was also a factor that influenced public opinion, as was the European response to the Ukrainian refugees compared to African or Middle Eastern refugees seeking a safe haven in Europe. Others have held that this is a European war, and Africa should not be pulled into it. After all, Africa itself has experienced many conflicts that have had major civilian casualties and violations of international law, but have not seen the same uproar from the West.

Regardless, the impact of the war on African economies is expected to be significant in the short term, coming on the heels of the Covid-19 pandemic. At the 2022 spring meetings of the IMF and the World Bank, Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the IMF, stated: ‘To put it very simply, a war in Europe, in Ukraine, translates into hunger in Africa’ (IMF Press, 2022). Initial estimates are that higher food prices could push some 10 million people could be pushed into poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (Pecquet, 2022). In addition, comes the significant concern that higher food prices, higher fuel costs and rising inflation may lead to social unrest, as governments battle within fiscally constrained environments already under debt stress.

In the longer term, the war in Ukraine is unlikely to affect relations between Russia and the continent negatively as regards the receptivity of African governments. Russia will probably step up its efforts with African states to build its economic, military and diplomatic relations, to circumvent political and economic isolation from the West, although Western sanctions will limit Russia’s scope here.

**Table 8. Africa-Russia relations in a nutshell**

African Students in Russia (2021) <sup>a</sup>	African Embassies in Russia	Russian Embassies in Africa	Total Arms Sales to Africa (2021) <sup>b</sup>	Russian ODA (2019) to sub-Saharan Africa <sup>c</sup>
27100	23	40	4.4 billion	US\$30.87 million



### Africa-Russia Partnership

Of the strategic partnerships reviewed here, the Africa–Russia partnership is the youngest. Summit-level meetings are held triennially, with latest one (2019) attended by 43 African Heads of State. Russia remains the largest arms supplier to Africa, making the partnership central to peace and security on the continent.

#### Unique features of engagement

- As part of its engagement strategy, Russia committed to holding annual political consultations between foreign ministers of Russia and the AU troika in the period between summits. Covid-19 restrictions may have affected this initiative, which should resume when restrictions are lifted.
- Russia prefers bilateral engagements with African countries. To strengthen its relations with the AU, it signed an MoU with the African Union Commission in 2014.
- As a key arms supplier, Russia has signed 20 military cooperation agreements with Africa since 2014, placing it in a central position in the peace and security affairs of the continent.

## AFRICA–TURKEY RELATIONS

*Emel Parlar Dal, Marmara University, Turkey*

### History

The history of Turkey’s involvement in Africa goes back to the 16th century, when the Ottomans first arrived in North Africa. They remained in Africa for four centuries, expanding their territory toward the Sahel region and establishing five separate administrations in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Eritrea. By 1912, however, they began to leave their administrations to European powers. During the Republican era and the Cold War period, Turkey prioritised relations with the West over the Middle East and Africa. Modern Turkey’s first official attempt to establish good relations with Africa dates back to the 1960s, diplomatic support was needed on the Cyprus issue from newly independent African states in the UN General Assembly (Firat, 1997). Although that did not yield the intended results, Ankara’s overtures to Africa sowed the seeds of pragmatism in Turkish–African relations.

As a continent long neglected by Turkey in the polarised and over-securitised environment of the Cold War, Africa came to the fore in the Turkish foreign policy agenda thanks to the Africa Action Plan launched in 1998. This process encouraged strategic partnerships and cooperation at the bilateral level, gradually institutionalised through Turkey–Africa Summits held every five years. As part of its Africa Action Plan, Turkey launched its first ‘Africa opening programme’ to develop diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural ties with African countries by opening new embassies, gaining membership in African institutions, engaging in high-level visits, developing contacts in international platforms, signing trade and investment agreements, promoting university-level cooperation and providing scholarships for African students in Turkey (Özkan & Akgün, 2010). However, domestic political events and the economic downswing precluded the sustainability of this initial opening. A second stage began when Turkey declared 2005 the Year of Africa, initiating an era of intense engagement.

## Scope of Turkey–Africa Cooperation

Turkey's engagement in Africa since 2005 has yielded significant political and economic results. Trade volumes with the continent reached 25 billion USD in 2020 (as against 5.4 billion USD in 2003); 10 billion USD of the total volumes concerned sub-Saharan countries (Republic of Turkey MFA, 2022). Regular meetings and business trips are organised by several Turkish business associations, including the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK), the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSİAD), and the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD), to encourage their members to invest in Africa. The sending of business consultants to newly opened Turkish embassies in sub-Saharan Africa and the participation of Turkish business groups in President Erdoğan's official visits to African countries are other measures adopted to promote and increase Turkish trade with Africa. The number of flights by Turkish Airlines in the African region increased, from five cities and five countries in 2005 to 61 cities and 40 countries in 2021, supporting Turkey's increasing trade with Africa. Turkey has free trade agreements (FTAs) in force with Morocco, Egypt and Mauritius, and its FTA with Sudan is undergoing ratification. Turkey engages in state-building efforts in Somalia, with intensified cooperation through development assistance, security partnership, and investments. Turkey has started FTA negotiations with Somalia and is working on FTA negotiations with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Cameroon, Seychelles, and Chad (Turkish Ministry of Trade, 2022).

Politically, Turkey attaches importance to opening diplomatic missions in all African countries to enhance its relations with the continent. The number of Turkish embassies in Africa has increased considerably – from 12 in 2002 to 43 in 2021. African countries have shown their appreciation for Turkey's involvement with the continent by increasing the number of their embassies in Ankara from 10 in 2008 to 37 (Turkey's MFA Website, 2022). Turkey is currently the fourth most-represented country in Africa, after the USA, China, and France.

Mutual high-level visits play an important role in maintaining Turkey's Africa Partnership policy. Recep T. Erdogan has visited 31 African countries so far, first as Prime Minister and then as President. Turkey received overwhelming support from African countries for its non-permanent UN Security Council membership in 2008. Turkey assertively advocates for a fairer world, with greater representation of African interests in key international organisations.

Although Turkey is geographically distant from African countries, recent years have witnessed its active participation in Africa's security space through its support of UN peacekeeping operations in Mali and the Central African Republic (Avundukuoglu, 2021), support to the G5 Sahel (Armstrong, 2021); the establishment of military attachés in 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Ministry of National Defence General Staff of the Republic of Turkey Website); sales of military hardware (Cannon, 2021) such as Turkish-made armed drones, cobras and armoured vehicles to African countries like Ghana, Rwanda, Nigeria, Burkina Faso (Africa Intelligence, 2020), Ethiopia (Coskun, Spicer and Toksabay, 2021) and Mauritania; and the establishment of a military training base, TURKSOM, in Mogadishu in 2017.

Alongside diplomatic missions, institutions such as the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) play key roles in Turkey's engagement in Africa. TIKA coordinates Turkey's assistance programs abroad, with 22 offices in Africa, four of which are located in North Africa. Other social and educational institutions, such as the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), the Yunus Emre Institute, and the Maarif Foundations help to increase Turkey's African presence (Republic of Turkey MFA, 2022).



## Funding Levels

In 2019, Turkish Official Development Aid (ODA) to Africa was \$102.64 million, of which 94 million USD was provided to sub-Saharan Africa – approximately 1.1% of Turkey’s total ODA (OECD statistics, 2022). Further, OECD statistics show that the ten largest sub-Saharan Africa aid-recipient countries between 2015 and 2020 were Somalia (54.90% of total ODA to SSA), Sudan (9.37%), Niger (4.77%) Djibouti (3.57%), Gambia (2.28%), Ethiopia (1.88%), Guinea (1.77%), Mauritania (1.67%), Chad (1.22%) and Senegal (1.22%). All of these recipient countries, except Senegal, are classified as ‘Least Developed Countries’ (LDCs). This mapping shows that Turkey’s aid disbursement is mainly needs-based; further, that most Turkish funding goes to Muslim-majority countries, some with Ottoman-era connections like Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan. There is a significant gap between the top aid recipient, Somalia (receiving more than half of Turkey’s total ODA), and the remaining nine recipients (see also Belder and Dipama, 2018). However, Turkey’s increasing engagement in Sahel countries such as Niger, Chad, and Mauritania, and geostrategic countries in the Horn of Africa such as Djibouti, indicates that geopolitics plays a significant role in its aid policy toward sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2017 and 2019, all Turkish ODA to sub-Saharan Africa was dispersed through bilateral channels. OECD statistics show that in 2020, grants constituted the largest type of ODA in Turkey’s aid to sub-Saharan Africa: loans are almost non-existent. Further, according to OECD data, in 2020 Turkey channelled its ODA to sub-Saharan Africa through the public sector – a clearly government-centric feature of Turkey’s approach to the region.

Apart from ODA, several other state institutions and Turkish NGOs (mainly religious ones) engage in fundraising for humanitarian, educational, health-focused, and other social projects in various African countries. In the cultural/educational sector, Turkey has provided 14,000 African students with post-graduate and doctorate scholarships since 1992 (Republic of Turkey, MFA). The Turkish Maarif Foundation deepens this relationship through educational activities abroad on Turkey’s behalf, and has become the most important agent of cultural diplomacy in Africa–Turkey relations. Currently, 25 of the 47 countries where the Turkish Maarif Foundation has educational institutions and 188 (45%) of its 415 educational institutions are located in Africa. Similarly, Turkey’s Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), with ten cultural centres in Africa, offers language-training courses and cultural exchange programmes. Seeking to reduce African dependency on Western media, the state-run Anadolu Agency opened a regional bureau in Addis Ababa in 2014. Turkey’s 2019 development assistance report shows a greater focus on sectors such as humanitarian assistance, education, and civil and social infrastructure than on food, agriculture, water and sanitation, trade, and industry/ mining.

### Box 1. Turkey-Somalia ODA 2015-2020

Somalia received 54% of all Turkish ODA between 2015 and 2020 Mainly composed of:

- Project Types Interventions
- Expert and Other Technical Assistance
- Scholarships
- Debt Relief
- Administrative Costs

## Structure & Institutions of the Africa–Turkey Relationship

Turkey has developed its relations with African countries on a mainly bilateral basis, but has also sought to establish international platforms to intensify the scope of these relations. Turkey was accorded AU observer status in 2005. In 2008, the AU declared Turkey a strategic partner. In the same year, the first Turkey–Africa Cooperation Summit was held in Istanbul, 49 African countries participating. At this summit, both the ‘Istanbul Declaration on Turkey–Africa Partnership: Cooperation and Solidarity for a Common Future’ and the ‘Cooperation Framework for Turkey–Africa Partnership’ were adopted, to create a new mechanism for future relations. The second Turkey–Africa Partnership Summit was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in 2014; the third summit returned to Istanbul in December 2021. Alongside these summits, ministerial review conferences with high-level officials have been held since 2011. Turkey–Africa Economic Business Forums are held regularly in partnership with the AU to regulate and enhance Africa–Turkey economic relations and streamline interactions between African and Turkish business communities (Turkey–Africa Economic and Business Forum Platform).

On the side-lines of the Second Turkey–Africa Business and Economic Forum, the first Turkey–ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Economic and Business Forum was held on 22–23 February 2018 in Istanbul; it brought together more than one thousand business people and ministers from the Economic Community of West African States. The first Africa–Turkey Agriculture Ministers Meeting and Agribusiness Forum, held in April 2017 in Antalya, brought together agricultural and deputy ministers, representatives of international organisations, and businesspersons from African countries, to boost Africa–Turkey cooperation in the agricultural sector. In addition, in 2010, Turkey and Egypt co-chaired the International Donor’s Conference for the Reconstruction and Development of Darfur in Cairo. Turkey hosted Somalia Conferences in 2010 and 2012 in Istanbul, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011 in Istanbul, and the High-Level Partnership Forum for Somalia in 2016.

**Table 9. Africa-Turkey relations in a nutshell**

ODA from Turkey to Africa (2019)	ODI from the partner to Africa	Trade Volume w/t Africa	Number of scholarships (post-graduate and PhD)	Number of Embassies in Africa	Number of African embassies in Turkey	Number of military hardware sales	Number of Turkish Maarif Education institutions in Africa	Number Of Turkey-Africa Co-operation Summits
\$102.64 million USD, of which 94 million USD to SSA	2003: 100 million USD 2021: 6.5 billion USD	2003:5.4 billion USD 2021:25.3 billion USD	14000	43	37	13 countries	188 / over 415	3 in 2008, 2014 and 2021



### **Africa-Turkey Partnership**

This partnership initially met at summit level; however, to increase the engagement footprint Ministerial conferences has taken place since 2011. In addition to the political engagements, the Africa–Turkey Economic Business Forums are held regularly in partnership with the AU to regulate and enhance Africa–Turkey economic relations and streamline interactions between African and Turkish business communities.

### **Unique features of engagement**

Of the partnerships under review, Turkey has adopted a multi- and diverse-level engagement approach covering several sectors. Turkey has participated in Africa’s peace and security efforts as part of UN peacekeeping operations in Mali, CAR and in the G5 Sahel and the establishment of a military training base, TURKSOM, in Mogadishu in 2017.

### **Turkey’s diverse engagement initiatives in Africa also include:**

- opening new embassies
- gaining membership in African institutions
- engaging in high-level visits
- developing contacts in international platforms
- signing trade and investment agreements
- promoting university-level cooperation
- providing scholarships for African students in Turkey
- religious programmes focussing on humanitarian, educational, health and other social projects
- REC commitment – the first Turkey–ECOWAS Economic and Business Forum was held 2018.

# PART THREE

## THE AFRICAN—NORDIC RELATIONSHIP

In this part of the report, we analyse the current state of the Africa–Nordic relationship by examining the sum total of bilateral relationships between the Nordic countries and their African counterparts, in particular in the fields of trade, development aid, migration, climate, peace and security, and multilateral cooperation.

### History

*Tor Sellström, Nordic Africa Institute (NAI)*

The relationship between Africa and the Nordics has taken various forms in the course of history, from the dark chapter of the slave trade to the more recent, and exceptional Nordic model for development aid.

From the mid-17th century, the Nordic countries joined the European powers in the Atlantic slave trade. It is often argued that the Nordic countries did not have a colonial past and were therefore in a more advantageous position for developing a common outlook with independent Africa later. However, it is that both the Danes and the Swedes constructed slave forts such as Christiansborg and Carolusborg<sup>4</sup> in today's Ghana and subsequently held the West Indian slave-based colonies of the Danish Virgin Islands and St Barthélemy. It is estimated that Sweden-Finland sold some 2 000 enslaved Africans, while Denmark–Norway sold over 100 000.

From the 18th century, Nordic relations with Southern Africa were extensive and multi-faceted as scores of Nordic merchants, scientists, explorers and missionaries settled there. According to scholar Alan H. Winquist “in many regards, at least prior to 1900, Scandinavians were the fifth (after the British, Dutch, German and French) most significant European group in South Africa”, and “there is hardly an occupation or historical event where some significant Scandinavian contribution is not evident” (Sellström, 2004). In fact, during the peak period 1886 to 1914, the Nordic contribution to South African immigration amounted to less than 1% (Kuparinen 1991:357). However, among the immigrants were several businessmen, scientists and professionals who came to play prominent roles in their new countries. A similar role was played by Swedes and Finns in Namibia, where the explorer Charles John Andersson and long-distance trader Axel Eriksson paved the way for a significant Swedish presence from the mid-1850s. In 1870, Finnish missionaries started working in Ovamboland. As a result, Namibia like the five Nordic countries became a predominantly Evangelical Lutheran nation. In addition to Namibia, Nordic missionaries were prominent in countries such as, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The Nordics actively supported African independence processes, including liberation movements that waged armed struggle in Algeria, Guinea-Bissau and in the White minority-ruled South, siding with African countries against European powers such as France, Portugal and the UK.

The relationship between Sweden and Ethiopia, the latter was, one of only three sovereign African states at the time, is as an early example of cooperation between a Nordic and an African country. Close links were forged between the royal houses of the two countries, as well as within the League of Nations. The future Emperor Haile Selassie visited Sweden in 1924 and in 1934, Swedish officers

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4 Also known as Cape Coast Castle.

were recruited to the Ethiopian war college. Despite Mussolini's protests, a Swedish--Ethiopian friendship and trade agreement was signed in 1935, two months before the Italian's invasion of Ethiopia. After the Second World War, Sweden opened an embassy in Addis Ababa and in 1954, Ethiopia became the first country to receive Swedish development aid. In the ensuing following years, more than 6 000 schools were built under the Swedish aid programme.

Liberation movements that benefitted from Nordic support were the African National Congress (ANC), the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), and the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) (Hammerstad, 2012). In addition, Sweden and Norway provided large amounts of development assistance to anti-apartheid nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and movements within Namibia and South Africa in the 1980s.



Danish volunteers at SOMAFCO in Tanzania. Source: "Education in Exile – SOMAFCO, the ANC school in Tanzania, 1978-1992"

From modest beginnings in the 1950s and 1960s, the Nordic countries came to occupy leading positions in various Official Development Assistant (ODA) rankings, regarding Eastern and Southern Africa. The Nordic aid policies were individually or collectively described as a 'Nordic model'. Due to the adherence to UN principles, high aid volumes, altruism and the priority given to democracy, human rights and good governance, this model was considered exceptional. However, other actors focused on strict economic aspects and were critical of the "Nordic exceptionalism" of "do-gooders" (de Bengy Puyvallée and Kristian Bjørkdahl, 2021).

Several Nordic concerned the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC). Established in 1980 to promote economic independence vis-à-vis apartheid South Africa, the nine member states of SADCC held annual donor meetings. This culminated in Harare, Zimbabwe, in January 1986 with the signing of a Joint Declaration on Expanded Economic and Cultural Cooperation between the Nordic countries and the then 14 SADCC member states.<sup>5</sup> This can be seen as the precursor to the present day African-Nordic meetings of foreign ministers.

### Overview of current relations

Since the turn of the millennium, the Nordic countries have lost their distinctive role on the African continent. There has been a series of domestic and global events: at home, the rise of populist

<sup>5</sup> Initially valid until 1990, the region-to-region collaborative venture was later extended. As SADCC in 1992 was transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and democratic South Africa joined in 1994, the original agreement with the Nordic countries became outdated.

nationalism and the 2015 refugee crisis; globally, the War on Terror and security concerns; and in Africa the growing role of China and other new actors, including private organisations like the Gates Foundation, the Nordics “no longer form the core of a like-minded group”, but “are moving along different trajectories, in the process becoming part of new donor constellations” (Odén, 2012:9). As EU members, Denmark, Finland and Sweden find themselves separated from Norway and Iceland.

### **New priorities challenge the development cooperation**

In the 21st century, the principles of altruistic aid policies based on equality and solidarity were challenged by political and economic self-interest in the Nordic states. For example, the 2015 refugee crisis led to cuts across development aid, as well as deductions from the ODA budget in favour of the reception of asylum seekers. In Sweden, in 2015, a whopping 28 per cent of the aid budget was used on asylum seekers arriving in the country, instead of projects and programmes in Africa and elsewhere. Moreover, bilateral projects and programmes got a smaller share of ODA, whereas multilateral assistance, particularly under EU auspices, sometimes causing friction between Nordics and Africans.

When, in August 2021, the Danish government passed a law allowing asylum seekers to be sent abroad while their cases were being processed, in August 2021, the AU condemned “in the strongest terms possible” Denmark’s manner of avoiding its obligations under international law.<sup>6</sup> In 2022, the Russian invasion of Ukraine sparked debate in the Nordic countries, as to whether to re-allocate ODA funds to Ukrainian refugees. All Nordic countries have re-vamped their aid budgets to deal with the fallout from the Ukraine conflict. Denmark, Norway and Sweden released revised aid budgets in April and May. Norway reprioritised NOK 4 billion from the 2022 aid budget to cover Ukraine. Sweden announced it would take SEK 9 billion from the aid budget to cover Ukraine-related refugee costs in Sweden.

### **Gender equality and climate change**

The younger generations are generally those most in favour of globalization, solidarity and development cooperation. Among the many cross-cutting issues they find important are climate change and environmental degradation, not least in Africa, as well as gender perspectives and the status of girls and women. Both issues are increasingly important in the African-Nordic dialogue. For Norway, with its domestic and global oil and gas production, environmental challenges and alternative energy sources are core issues. Angola, Nigeria, Libya and other African countries are in a similar situation.

From a macro-economic point of view gender perspectives may seem less salient than climate and environmental issues. However, as gender-equal societies create better conditions for sustainable development, and this is taken into consideration in most Nordic aid activities. In 2014, Sweden took the lead in adopting a feminist foreign policy approach, “based on the conviction that sustainable peace, security and development can never be achieved if half the world’s population is excluded” (Zhukova 2021). This perspective is reflected in the guiding documents of other Nordic countries as well. In 2021, Denmark’s strategy for development cooperation declared that it was “anchored in democratic values and human rights, (i)n particular with regards to promoting and protecting the rights of girls and women” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2021).

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6 Ironically, Denmark was the first country to sign and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention.

## Peace and security

Peace and security is an area where the Nordic and African countries will continue to cooperate. In 2017, a Nordic Council of Ministers' opinion poll showed that security and defence constituted the most important field for Nordic cooperation.

Denmark and Iceland include the security dimension in their general foreign policy and international development guidelines. According to Iceland's strategy for 2019-20:23 states that "international development cooperation shall remain one of the pillars of Iceland's foreign policy and an important part of Iceland's national security policy". Even more explicit is Denmark's new foreign and security policy strategy, launched in January 2022, noting that "safety and security (...) is all about protecting us against the currents that threaten our values, freedom and cohesion", emphasizing that "Denmark must take steps to counter instability and obscurantist and militant Islamism by coming down hard on terror groups (...) in our southern neighbourhood regions."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it would be difficult to find a clearer example of a total reversal from the Nordic humanitarianism and 'do-goodery' of the 20th century.

Although Norway is so far the only Nordic country to have a permanent mission to the African Union, also Sweden and Denmark all provide significant support to the AU in the area of peace and security. For example, Norway's MOU with the AU, includes an agreement to support Africa in the field of peace and security. Two areas of support in the peace and security sector as a result of Norway's MOU are the secondment of personnel to the African Union via the NORCAPS roster of the Norwegian Refugee Council (see box 7), and policy development, research and training support to the Political Affairs and Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission via the Training for Peace (TfP) programme. The TfP is Norway's flagship support initiative to the AU, especially in the area of peace and security it is one of Norway's longest running programmes now in its 26th year.

### Box 2. NORCAP support to the AU 2022

NORCAP has since 2010 supported the African Union with seconded experts to contribute to developing the capacity of the organisation, in particular within policy development, peace support and democratic governance. For NORCAP, the main objective is to enable the AU to reach the targets and goals outlined in the Agenda 2063. The vision of Agenda 2063 foresees an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by the continent's own citizens, and representing a dynamic force in the international arena. To this end, all experts seconded through NORCAP are civilian African nationals. Their assignments are selected on the basis of AU needs and priorities, and they provide technical assistance and expertise.

In 2021, NORCAP seconded 20 experts to AU, a total of 208 deployment months, all funded by the Norwegian government through the Norwegian embassy in Addis Ababa. The number of seconded experts is set to increase significantly in 2022, with an estimated total of 43 seconded experts of which 28 positions will be funded by the Norwegian government. Through these deployments, NORCAP has become an important and trusted partner to the AU over the last decade.

Today, NORCAP supports two key projects with funding from the Norwegian government: 'Strategic Expertise to the AU (SE-AU)' and the AU initiative 'Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and the Mediation Support Unit' also known as FemWise/MSU. Both projects deploy experts to the AU's Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department where the experts work alongside AU colleagues offering expertise on mediation, capacity development, policy formulation, compliance, democracy and governance, human rights and peace support.

While SE-AU offers overall strategic expertise, whereas the FemWise/MSU project is particularly aimed at strengthening the involvement of women in peacebuilding processes on the African continent.

<sup>7</sup> Together with Finland, Norway and Sweden, Denmark has been a troop-contributing country to MINUSMA in Mali (UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission). In January 2022, the governing military junta in Bamako ordered a Danish contingent of some 90 special forces to leave the country with immediate effect.

## NORDIC DEVELOPMENT AID AND AFRICA

*Elling Tjønneland, Senior Researcher, Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI)*

Since the 1970s, development aid has been central to the Nordic approach to Africa, with development priorities and concerns inspiring Nordic foreign policy to the continent, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular. Compared to other Western aid donors the Nordic approach has been characterised by higher aid volumes, stricter adherence to UN principles, and with poverty reduction as the overarching objective. Solidarity and political commitments to development have been strong underlying values. The disbursement of aid has historically been divided between core funding to multilateral institutions and development banks, and bilateral aid to a smaller number of priority or partner countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. The common Nordic approach also led to several joint initiatives and joint aid programmes. As mentioned earlier in the report, this was particularly evident in Nordic support to Southern Africa and SADCC/SADC in the 1980s and early 1990s, including joint Nordic projects in the region.

### The aid volume and priorities

In the 1990s, Nordic development assistance to Africa began to change, accelerated after the turn of the millennium. Today, Nordic aid differs greatly from that of the past in many ways – in the choice of purposes, the instruments for disbursing aid and the choice of partner countries.

The Nordic countries have remained committed to maintaining high volumes of aid. The three Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) have aimed at maintaining aid volumes at 1% of Gross National Income, although Denmark has recently reduced this to the UN goal of 0.7%. Finland and Iceland aiming at 0.7% but remain well below this target; they have reduced their aid budgets significantly. On the other hand, the rapid economic growth in most Nordic countries has ensured a major increase in development aid flows. Most of these funds are disbursed to sub-Saharan Africa, although the proportion to Africa has decreased, in line with major increases to new regions and countries – including the Balkans (1990s), the Middle East and Afghanistan. Global UN development goals have provided important frameworks for the Nordic engagement.



**Table 10. Nordic Aid Volume 2020**

	Norway	Finland	Sweden	Denmark	Iceland
<b>Aid volume (USD million)/% of GNI (2020)</b>	4198/1.11	1275/0.47	6548/1.14	2649/0.73	62/0.29
<b>Objectives and priorities</b>	Poverty reduction, incl. human rights, gender and equality, climate and environment, anti-corruption as crosscutting priorities. Thematic priorities include climate change, humanitarian aid, food security, health and education	Poverty reduction; thematic priorities: the rights of women and girls, high-quality training and education, sustainable economy and decent work, democratic societies and climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable use of natural resources	Poverty reduction, with five perspectives: poor people rights, environment and climate, gender equality, and conflict. Development cooperation involves helping to enable poor people to improve their living conditions. Humanitarian assistance is intended to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain the human dignity of those affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts or other similar circumstances.	1: preventing and fighting poverty and inequality, conflict and displacement, irregular migration, and fragility. 2: halt climate change and restore balance to the planet, with strengthened resilience to climate change, and a focus on poor and vulnerable countries and people.	Poverty reduction and two goals: 1) enhancing social infrastructures and peace efforts; and 2) protecting the earth, with a focus on the sustainable use of natural resources.
<b>Top 5 African recipients (2019)</b>	Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique, and Malawi	Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, and Sierra Leone	Somalia, Mozambique, Ethiopia, DR Congo, and Tanzania	Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mali	Malawi, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ethiopia

One major change is the increased spending on domestic costs of hosting refugees in the Nordic countries. This began with the Balkan wars in the early 1990s and has remained an important component of Nordic aid budgets ever since. The Nordic countries allocated 15–30% of their aid budgets to the 2015 European refugee crisis. The share is much smaller today, but the unfolding crisis in Ukraine will lead to major changes, and Ukraine itself may become a main recipient of Nordic aid funds. The growing focus on migration and on reducing in-migration to the Nordic countries has also led to a shift in focus in relations with Africa, evident in the support to EU migration policy and in disbursements to the Sahel. This is most pronounced in the case of Denmark which has made migration a key priority in its aid budget.<sup>8</sup>

A strong focus on climate change has also emerged as a key priority in the Nordic engagement with Africa (see also the section on climate change in this report). Also, business development and job creating have emerged as important priorities, as seen primarily in increased disbursement through the Nordic development finance institutions. Further, there has been greater emphasis on targeting development aid to conflict-affected countries and regions – mainly in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

An OECD review of the development cooperation profiles of the Nordic countries 2010–2019 by the OECD reveals common Nordic priorities for bilateral ODA allocations across several sectors (OECD 2021). These include social infrastructure and services (education, health, support to government

<sup>8</sup> See also Joint Nordic Organisational Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF) by Mira Berger, Eilis Lawlor, Kris Prasada Rao, Stephen Spratt - <https://eba.se/en/reports/joint-nordic-organisational-assessment-of-the-nordic-development-fund-ndf/11350/>

and civil society, water supply and sanitation); humanitarian aid, the promotion of aid for trade and for improving the trade performance of developing countries and their integration into the world economy. Also gender equality and women's empowerment across all sectors are in focus in the screened bilateral allocable aid of the Nordic countries, significantly higher than the 2019 DAC country average of 5.5%. On the other hand, despite similarities in thematic areas for development cooperation, there are also divergences in the Africa policies and strategies of the Nordic countries, in line with individual evolving priorities and economic realities.

Popular and political support for development aid remains high in the Nordic countries. Popular support, as measured by opinion polls, has been stable, even increasing. Norway scores very high (more than 90% support). Sweden has experienced fluctuations, with a recent drop to slightly over 60% (a return to the situation in the late 1990s). In general, the Nordic parliaments have provided consistent and strong support, with 'aid-friendly' political parties providing majority support for high volumes of aid. However, in all parliaments there are minorities in favour of reducing the aid budget. In Denmark, this led to a decline in aid budgets from 1% to 0.7%; in the Norwegian Parliament, the political centre ensured that Conservative-led governments remained committed to the 1% target.

### **New instruments and changing role of partner countries**

Also, bilateral aid to African partner countries has changed for all Nordic countries. An increasing share of such aid is now channelled as earmarked funding through multilateral institutions. Most bilateral aid to partner countries in Africa is currently disbursed through UN agencies, development banks and global funds or through NGOs, and there is limited direct Nordic support to public-sector institutions in partner countries (or 'state-to-state' collaboration). Core funding to multilateral institutions has also seen changes: increasingly, it is being provided for new global funds or special means of pursuing thematic priorities such as climate issues, migration or health.

These changes in the use of bi- and multilateral aid have also led to changes in the role of partner countries. Nordic aid is increasingly distributed for global and regional purposes, and to a much wider group of partner countries. The selection of partner countries has also changed, shifting to conflict-affected and fragile countries in the Sahel region and the wider Horn of Africa. These changes are particularly evident in the case of Norwegian aid with its focus on global initiatives, whereas Sweden is strongest in its commitment to partner countries based on long-term country strategies.

### **Nordic cooperation**

The above-mentioned changes have also affected Nordic cooperation on development aid. There is now limited formal cooperation in bilateral aid: the Nordic countries are increasingly aligning themselves with other regional groupings, depending on alliance patterns/memberships and thematic priorities. The 'Nordic aid group' has largely been replaced by a broader category of likeminded donor countries within OECD. For Sweden, Denmark and Finland, EU membership has made the EU an important channel for their aid as well as for joint policies. Norway works more closely with other bi- and multilateral donors in their priority areas (health and climate) – with the UK, Germany, the World Bank, the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and the Gates Foundation. One of the few remaining instruments is the Nordic Development Fund, which provides concessional finance for development interventions. Today the focus is on climate change.

### **Covid-19**

These changes are also evident in the Nordic response to the Covid pandemic. The Nordic countries have differed in their response to the pandemic in their aid-funded programmes and projects, but all

have redirected supported interventions and provided fresh funds to fight the pandemic and alleviate the sufferings of poor and vulnerable people. Norway has been in a special position here, declared global health a main priority sector since the beginning of the millennium. Support for this has been through diplomatic initiatives, major funding to new global funds and instruments such as the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), as well as earmarked funding through multilateral institutions. The other Nordic countries, with the partial exception of Sweden, have been relatively marginal contributors to the main Norwegian initiatives and have used other channels and instruments. With the onset of Covid-19, Norway, together with South Africa, has led the global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to vaccines (COVAX). COVAX is co-led by GAVI, CEPI and WHO. Of the Nordic countries, only Sweden has joined Norway as a major financial contributor to this initiative.

## TRADE, INVESTMENT AND LOANS

*Isaac Bheki Khambule, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa*

During the 20th century, each Nordic country developed a distinct economic profile vis-à-vis Africa. Through investments, loans and development assistance, the Nordics have contributed to growth on the African continent, emphasising trade and investment to stimulate business development and job creation. They have made increased use of their development finance institutions as well as commercial instruments to stimulate private-sector engagement and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The largest development finance institution is the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (Norfund), established in 1997.

The first-ever Nordic–East Africa Trade Summit was held in Kampala, Uganda, in 2015, with the intention of linking business professionals and entrepreneurs from both regions. Sweden’s exports to East Africa stood at €183 million in 2014, accounting 37% of imports from the Nordic countries (Lubuulwa, 2015). These imports were largely machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, paper and paperboard. In the same period, the Nordic area was a main destination for exports from East Africa, with exports to Norway contributing 45% of all exports, to the value of approximately €60 million (Lubuulwa, 2015). Sweden’s exports to South Africa stand at €952,8 million annually – moreover, with an estimated 45 000 Swedes visiting the country every year (Embassy of Sweden, 2022). Nordic countries’ foreign trade with sub-Saharan Africa has been increasing for more two decades (Oden, 2011).

**Table 11: FOTR49: Foreign trade, by flow, reporting country, time and partner, in euros**

	Denmark		Finland		Iceland	Norway	Sweden		
	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2020	2021	2020	2021
	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa	Other Africa
Import	208,387,640	232,807,190	224,527,400	467,323,550	18,623,080	365,754,000	414,488,000	207,271,000	237,421,910
Export	549,968,610	681,137,760	456,038,000	476,079,900	2,395,830	238,151,000	339,232,000	783,741,840	841,555,140

Source: Nordic Statistics database (2022)

Sweden had the highest exports to Africa at €783,7 million in 2020; Iceland had the lowest exports estimated at €2,4 million in the same period, Norway recorded the highest imports from Africa with €365,8 million; Iceland was lowest imports, with €18,6 million (see Table). These low figures can be attributed to the lockdown implemented by countries across the globe to fight the spread of Covid-19.

The high trade imbalance between Nordic and Africa may be due to various factors, including the slow pace of vaccination in African countries, affecting business production. Trade imbalance is also evident in trade relations between African countries and developed Western countries.

The 2021 import and export figures show improvement, as many countries had by then opened their economies to global trade. Sweden recorded the highest export to Africa in 2021, with over €841,6 million followed by Denmark at €681 million, and Iceland contributing the least, with €2,4 million. Imports from Africa showed a slight improvement, reaching a high of €467,323,550 in (Finland), followed by €414,5 million (Norway) and the least imports in Denmark: €232,8 million. This figure may be higher than Africa's imports to Iceland if data were available for 2021.

After the Norwegian–African Business Summit in 2019, Emejulu (2019) identified the blue economy, renewable energy and human capital and technology as three economic sectors of convergence for Nordic–Africa trade and investment. Knowledge-sharing between Africa and Nordic countries will be required, to improve the continent's prospects and achieve living standards like those of the Nordic countries. However, Ahoi (2017) identifies MedTech and pharmaceuticals, education and technology as the three key sectors that align with Africa's needs and offer areas for strengthening trade.

At the Norwegian Africa Business Association (NABA) seminar in 2019, under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Marianne Hagen, noted that Africa had become an important trading partner for Norway, with Norwegian companies exporting goods to a value of over €1,8 billion, a 50% increase from 2017 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). However, Oden (2011) observed that Nordic–Africa trade is marginal compared to international trends and as a share of trade between the two groupings.

Although the overall volumes of the economic relationship between African countries and the Nordic region are relatively small compared to their overall trade volumes, trade and investment remains an important. Africa's share of total Nordic trade is around 1%, whereas direct investments represent less than 1% of each Nordic country's FDI.

The African and Nordic countries engage in trade and investment in a diverse range of sectors. For example, Sweden trades in goods in the automotive, construction, telecommunications and defence sectors, whereas NORFUND is active in, inter alia, the environmental technology and renewable energy sectors.

### Investments and loans

Nordic investments in Africa date back to the early 1970s and early 1980s, with the African Development Fund. For Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, support for Africa began in 1982. Finland supported Zimbabwe's recovery and development efforts after the catastrophic failure of the country's land reform. This initiative was undertaken through the Zimbabwe Trust Fund, which reflects Nordic's commitment to sustainable development in Africa (African Development Bank, 2022).

The footprint of Nordic investment in Africa is evident in the €95 million loan facility for special projects underpinned by the Nordic–Baltic interests in the African continent (NIB, 2018). This is a joint initiative with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), which is a South African state-owned development finance institution. The history cooperation between the NIB and DBSA goes back to the 1990s, when €27,98 million facility was allocated to Zambia and South Africa. The DBSA uses its regional mandate and capital management skills to head these projects in parts of Southern Africa. In addition to these investments, Denmark contributed €23,3 million through the Agriculture Fast Track Fund, thereby enabling infrastructure financing for the agricultural sector (African Development Bank Group, 2022). Denmark also made a €27,99 million grant available to the African Water Facility, which focused on improving climate-smart access to water and sanitation in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Somalia (African Development Bank, 2021).

The loans and investments made by NIB extend to the €100 million loan facility signed with the African Export–Import Bank (Afreximbank), a multilateral trade institution under the African Development Bank. This loan facility is critical because it is geared toward supporting areas of traditional development finance, such as infrastructure, energy, telecom, special economic zones and industrial parks (NIB, 2018). Development finance to Afreximbank could play a significant role in addressing infrastructure and energy challenges and limit the costs of doing business in Africa.

In 2015, Norfund had committed €1,48 billion invested in 700 companies and created over 382 000 jobs across developing countries. In addition, Norfund acquired a 12.2% share in Equity Bank, Kenya's second-largest bank (Norfund, 2015). In 2017, Norfund approved a €17,71 in equity investments for sub-Saharan African countries (Sharma, 2017). Finland's most recently adopted Africa strategy includes a commitment to accelerate exports to Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa as a market response to the Covid-19 pandemic (Homanen and Relander, 2021).

## MIGRATION IN AFRICAN–NORDIC RELATIONS

*Elling Tjønneland, Senior researcher, CMI*

Historically, support to refugees and internally displaced persons has been an important dimension of Nordic engagement with Africa, particularly through humanitarian aid. However, the refugee crisis in Europe has seen development aid to Africa being diverted to cover refugee costs in the recipient countries. This became apparent with the Balkan wars in the 1990s, and then during the major 2015 European refugee crisis which saw major shifts in the disbursement of aid from Africa and developing countries towards covering the costs of hosting refugees in the Nordic countries. The ongoing war in Ukraine is expected to have a similar impact, with reallocation of significant parts of the aid budget from Africa and low-income developing countries to Ukraine and support to refugees from the war.

The 2015 European refugee crisis also led to other significant changes in aid policies. Most important was a new focus on limiting or halting migration at the countries of origin, clearly seen in the Nordic support for the new European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. This EU programme focuses on irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. It was created to address the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration and to contribute to better migration management. Norway – not an EU member – is also a financial contributor to this programme, which targets three regions: the Sahel/ Lake Chad region, the Horn of Africa and North Africa. This new focus has contributed to making countries in these regions new main partner countries for bilateral aid from several Nordic countries. It has also led to changes in programmes and projects supported.

The European refugee crisis has also reinforced another trend in the Nordic countries: implementation of much stricter entry requirements for refugees and asylum-seekers, and efforts to limit the numbers arriving in the Nordic countries. (This has also been linked to a strengthening of right-wing political parties.) Take, for example, the case of Denmark, where the government in 2021 launched plans for establishing aid-funded reception centres for asylum-seekers in African countries (Rwanda, in this specific instance). Refugees and asylum seekers who managed to enter Denmark would be returned to third countries in Africa while their applications were being processed. This was intended to discourage refugees from arriving at all.

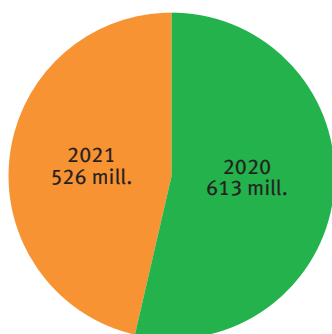
A further dimension to the flow of refugees and migrants to the Nordic countries should be noted: it has led to a sizeable African diaspora in all Nordic countries. This has made a significant impact on evolving relations between the Nordic countries and Africa, as is evident in several areas. One important dimension concerns remittances from the diaspora to families, relatives and local communities in their countries of origin. Take the case of the Somali diaspora: in Norway, they

number more than 40 000, with most arrivals after the turn of the millennium. Annual remittances to their home country is now more than the total Norwegian development aid to Somalia – which is among the main biggest recipients of official Norwegian development aid to Africa. A similar trend is found in the other Nordic countries.

**Figure 12. Norwegian Aid to Somalia vs Somali remittances from Norway in NOK**

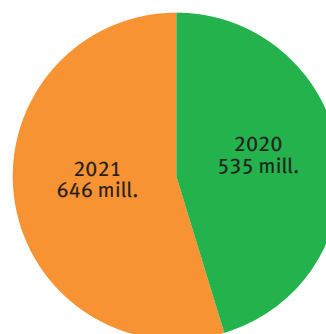
### Somalia:

Norwegian aid to Somalia in 2021 was 526 million and in 2020 613 million



### Remittances

– as recorded by “valutaregisteret” at the Tax authorities, was 535 million in 2020 and 646 million in 2021.



## AFRICAN–NORDIC COOPERATION AT THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORA

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With the changing geopolitical context come changing geopolitical relationships. Global turbulence creates new windows of opportunity for cooperation, and also requires new and creative ways of working towards shared goals and commitments. This has led to a push for deeper multilateral cooperation between the African countries and the Nordics – for instance, in the area of climate change and climate-related risks and peacebuilding initiatives (de Coning & Nortvedt, 2020).

Regarding African–Nordic relations, two areas of cooperation can serve as examples of deeper regional collaboration. The first is related to financial accountability, transparency and integrity (FACTI), a thematic area of cooperation initiated by Nigeria and Norway. This cooperation resulted in the establishment of the FACTI panel in March 2020, by the Norwegian president of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Nigerian president of the UN General Assembly. The panel is set to work on illegal financial flows, fair and predictable tax systems and cross-border corruption as part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Massive amounts are lost every year through widespread corruption. In order to finance critical action on poverty, global health and the climate crisis. Recovering funding lost through corruption and tax evasion could have immense transformative potential (FACTI panel, 2021).

The second area of cooperation is related to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. As current members of the UN Security Council (UNSC), Gabon, Ghana and Norway have all chosen to prioritise this agenda, following the example of South Africa and Sweden example from their periods on the UNSC (Sellström, Olsson & Chang, 2021). WPS is a wide and cross-cutting agenda with several thematic policy areas, providing opportunities for broad cooperation. For instance, while Norway works systematically for women’s participation in political processes, the focus of Gabon is more on the economic participation of women. Advancing strategic policy areas such as the WPS agenda hinges on the composition of the elected members and the priorities of the permanent members.

When tensions are high among the UNSC permanent five (P5), focusing on promoting cooperation among the elected ten to achieve strategic goals serves to strengthen multilateral cooperation among other regions.

Given the increasing tensions involving the global superpowers, notably the UNSC P5, looking for partners and strengthened cooperation beyond the P5 could provide the African and the Nordic states the opportunities to enhance their impact in multilateral fora and increase the effect of both regions' focal points in these fora. As global challenges persist and there is continued polarisation among the most powerful nation-states, pushing for cooperation wherever and whenever possible becomes essential to enable utilisation of the existing capacities of international forums.

## NORDIC CLIMATE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION EFFORTS IN AFRICA

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Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden have all committed to a 55% net reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, whereas Norway has committed to 50% but aims for 55% in its nationally determined contributions (EU 2020; Government of Iceland 2021; Government of Norway 2020). While the Nordic countries are all committed to reducing GHG emissions domestically, they are all also committed to supporting mitigation efforts in the Global South. All these countries have either a development element in their climate strategies, or a climate element in their development strategies. The Nordic countries have made climate issues a key priority in their development assistance to Africa, but differ somewhat as to priorities and interventions supported.

Nordic cooperation in support of mitigation and adaptation in Africa has been limited. One of the few examples of joint initiatives is the Nordic Development Fund (NDF), a Nordic international finance institution that provides funds to low-income countries. Climate change has not been emphasised as a priority. Funds are used for mitigation and adaptation activities, typically through co-financing cooperation with multilateral development banks (MDBs) and other financial institutions. All funding is allocated from the development aid budgets of the Nordic countries (Nordic Council of Ministers 2017).<sup>9</sup>

Nordic governments as well as non-state sectors in the Nordic countries contribute to international cooperative initiatives (ICIs) on climate. Here the largest portion goes to climate mitigation, predominantly in the energy and transport sectors.

The separation between climate mitigation and climate adaptation is not always clear-cut. But, examining funding flows of public finance for climate-change adaptation in Africa, Savvidou et al. (2021) find that overall, more funding went to mitigation (61%) than to adaptation (33%) between 2014 and 2018. There are differences among the Nordic countries in this respect. Sweden has a much stronger focus on climate adaptation; Norway's main focus is on mitigation (Norad, 2021). The Nordic countries also provide considerable support through multilateral channels, the UN Green Climate Fund in particular. However, Norway is the only country to have made support to protection of tropical forests (REDD+ and the Forest and Climate Initiative) a main priority. Most Norwegian funding is allocated to this purpose – with protection of the Congo Basin as the main priority in Africa (see Figure 13 below).

However, funders do not appear to target those countries that are most in need or most vulnerable (Ibid). However, Sweden and Norway are, respectively, the fifth and sixth largest bilateral donors as regards adaptation-related finance. With funding for research, the priorities are reversed. Funding for

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<sup>9</sup> See also Joint Nordic Organisational Assessment of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF) by Mira Berger, Eilis Lawlor, Kris Prasada Rao, Stephen Spratt - <https://eba.se/en/reports/joint-nordic-organisational-assessment-of-the-nordic-development-fund-ndf/11350/>

research on climate change impacts (in Africa) has predominantly focused on adaptation, not mitigation (Overland et al., 2021). Also here, the Nordic countries rank high on the list of donors. Of the countries that finance Africa-related climate research, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are all among the top 16 funders, although substantial declines in funding streams have occurred after 2016, with neither Denmark nor Finland funding any projects recorded in the Dimensions database after the Paris Agreement (Ibid.).

One specific effort on the part of Norway is the Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), launched at the climate summit in Bali in December 2007. Preventing uncontrolled warming will require strong mitigation efforts. As 10–30% of global GHG emissions can be ascribed to tropical logging (USC, 2013), forest conservation is recognised as a central solution. Preventing deforestation and forest degradation is also the only mitigation effort specifically mentioned in the Paris Agreement. NICFI is Norway's largest international climate initiative; in 2007 Norway pledged to spend 3 billion USD annually on global deforestation efforts through the REDD+ (Reducing greenhouse gas Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) initiatives for increasing the uptake and sequestration of carbon in tropical forests in developing countries. The REDD+ framework is a collective label for governance measures aimed at avoiding the negative consequences related to carbon sequestration through forest conservation. To that end, REDD+ projects aim to provide local communities with compensation, so that they have no net losses, and preferably see net gains from a project, with extra attention paid to the wellbeing of vulnerable and marginalised sections of society (Svarstad and Benjaminsen, 2017).

By 2020, 50 countries, half of the African states, already had projects or were in the planning stages, with over two billion USD in approved activities since 2008, funded mainly as bilateral aid (Watson and Schalatek, 2020; Wong et al., 2019). Africa has the main share of projects, but the largest investments have gone to Asia (Leon, 2019). The map below shows all African countries that received at least one REDD+ project between 1994 and 1997.<sup>10</sup>

REDD+ has been promoted as a cost-effective climate-mitigation measure that also enhances the livelihoods of the communities affected (UN–REDD Programme, 2012); it has even been touted as ‘the biggest success in climate change talks’ (Aurora, 2011). However, most REDD+ projects involve changes in existing and traditional land-use, in turn giving rise to issues of land access, land rights and equity – even social and political conflict (Patel et al., 2013). Several studies report that the ‘do no harm’ principles have often not been followed, and many case-studies show net negative consequences for people living in or near sites – such as impairment for forest communities, marginalisation, corruption, and increased rent-seeking (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen, 2014; Himmelfarb, 2012).

In 2021 Norway decided to launch a new climate initiative targeting support for renewable energy in countries relying on coal-fired power stations. This would primarily involve middle-income countries in Africa and Asia. The Norwegian Norfund will be the main channel for this initiative. The first funding was made available for solar energy projects in South Africa.

Concerns have also been voiced that there is inadequate follow-up of social and environmental safeguards concerning rights for indigenous people, reduction of poverty and natural forest preservation (Riksrevisjonen, 2018). The Office of the Auditor General of Norway found that the risk of fraud following project allocations had not been adequately dealt with in connection with project implementation. Moreover, as the largest individual donor by far, Norway stood for 51% of the financial contributions between 2008 and 2016 – but this funding has yet to trigger increased financing from other donors (Ibid.).

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10 Only three projects started before 2003 (in 1994, 1997 and 2002 respectively).



**Figure 13. African Countries that received at least one REDD+ project, 1994-2018**

(Data source: Simonet G., Atmadja, S., Agrawal A., Bénédet F., Cromberg M., de Perthuis C., Haggard D., Jansen N., Karsenty A., Liang W., Morel, A., Newton P., Sales A-M, Satwika, A., Schaap B., Seyller C., Selviana, V., Vaillant G., (2020) ID-RECCO, International Database on REDD+ projects and programs: Linking Economics, Carbon and Communities. version 4.1.)

## OLD AND NEW CULTURAL INSTITUTES IN AFRICA

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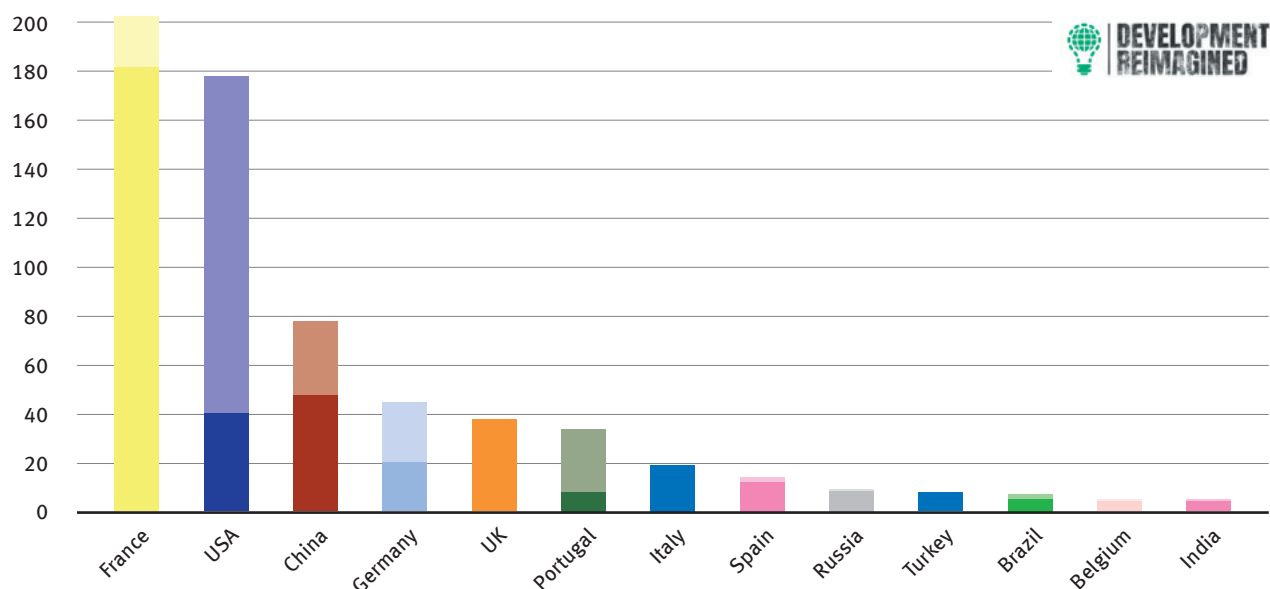
In Africa, foreign interest in cultural cooperation has grown steadily along with the intensifying international competition over Africa's natural resources, markets and support in international forums. Such soft power was a part of the Nordic countries' Africa relations from the early days. It has generally flourished outside the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, through cooperation and exchange programmes of cultural actors, with conferences, exhibitions, concerts and possibilities for students and researchers to visit and study in the Nordic countries. For instance, one study of Norwegian cultural cooperation showed that its significance for foreign policy has increased under the responsibility of art organisations (Berge, 2018). Also, cultural institutions, which can be regarded as the most visible form of such cooperation, are part of the Nordic countries' cultural diplomacy, although not in Africa. One exception is the Swedish Scandinavian Culture Centre, established in 2009 by a non-profit association in Cairo. It offers instruction in the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian languages, and has received support for its exchange activities from the Swedish Institute, a government agency that promotes Sweden's image abroad. Another exception is Villa Karo, a Finnish–African cultural centre opened in 2000 in Grand-Popo, Benin, which, inter alia, provides residency to Finnish cultural workers. It is also run by an association but is supported by the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture.

During the last 20 years, foreign cultural institutes in Africa have multiplied in overall numbers and diversity mushroomed as on no other continent. Whereas in 2002 there were less than 200 such institutes, by 2022 the total number was close to 700.

The former colonial powers are still the biggest group – with over 200 *Alliances Françaises*, 46 Goethe Institutes and 38 British Councils – but the USA has about 170 centres in Africa, and the Chinese Confucius, with 80 locations, has increased most rapidly.<sup>11</sup> The first Confucius Institute in Africa was established at the University of Nairobi in 2005. The Chinese institutes work within universities, giving them a role in training students in various forms of Chinese presence in Africa (Li, 2021). Other newcomers include the Turkish Yunus Emre (10 institutes established since 2010), and the Russian *Russkiy Mir* (nine institutes established in 2019). Comparable to cultural institutes are the Islamic Preaching societies sponsored by Gulf countries and the Iranian Al-Mustafa University network, founded in 2007, in African countries where there are Muslim communities.

The major African economic powers – Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa – are the most attractive locations for these institutes. Geopolitics and cultural connections explain why Brazil has established institutes in Lusophone countries, India in Eastern and Southern Africa, and Turkey in countries with a Muslim majority. All African countries host at least one foreign cultural institute.

**Table 14. International cultural institutes in Africa, 2019** (Source: Nederhood, n.d.)



11 Data from Joshua Nederhood, Development Reimagined. The total numbers include also “minor institutes”, like Confucius Classrooms in addition to the Institutes.

# PART FOUR

## CONCLUSION

In this final section, we summarize the findings of this report, and offer recommendations for how African–Nordic cooperation can continue to evolve and remain relevant for both regions.

This cooperative relationship is reflected in, and symbolised by, the annual African–Nordic foreign ministers’ meetings. Africa–Nordic cooperation can also be assessed as the sum total of African–Nordic bilateral relations in the areas of trade, development, peace and security and multilateral cooperation. We have examined both these aspects.

As to the annual meetings of African and Nordic foreign ministers, when compared to similar arrangements – like the Africa–China, Africa–Europe, Africa–India, Africa–Russia and Africa–Turkey meetings – several features stand out:

- The informal nature of the African–Nordic foreign minister’s meetings. There is no formal process for generating an agenda, preparing the meetings, or resulting in the adoption of formal agreements. The meetings act as a sounding board, and all participating countries may propose topics to be discussed. The emphasis is on creating a space for informal dialogue; the goal is to strengthen and consolidate the African–Nordic relationship by building mutual understanding of interests and positions in an atmosphere not constrained by the need to negotiate a formal outcome statement, cooperation framework or other such agreements.
- The hosting of meetings rotates among African and Nordic countries; the host-nation has considerable influence on the theme of the meeting.
- Although no formal agreements are reached at these meetings, there is sometimes a Chairs’ Summary or an agreed press statement.
- The meetings are not preceded by a meeting of senior officials to prepare the meeting agenda. Thus, such meetings have very low transaction costs compared to the other partnership meetings analysed in this report.
- These meetings take place at the foreign minister level. The comparable strategic partnership arrangements (or summits) discussed in this report are generally anchored in the heads of state or government level. Such summits require considerable preparation and are held every few years, with meetings at the foreign and other ministerial and senior official level in-between, to follow up on plans agreed at the summit level and prepare for the next meeting. In contrast, the meetings of African and Nordic foreign ministers are held each year, serving as a regular or ongoing dialogue forum.
- These meetings do not attempt to involve all the countries on the African continent. The number of countries involved has increased, and now hovers around 25 African countries. Keeping the number manageable contributes to lowering the coordination cost and maintaining the informality of the meetings.

Over the years, various themes have been discussed at these meetings – generally global issues of mutual interest. Themes discussed in recent years include the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063, as well as issues related to climate change, trade and investment, and peace and security.

These annual meetings offer opportunities to consolidate the special relationship between the African and Nordic countries, creating a space where political issues of mutual concern can be discussed.

Thus, they have helped to broaden the scope of African–Nordic relations, beyond development cooperation and towards a more politically-oriented and interest-based strategic partnership.

All the countries involved seem to value the current format, and there are no plans to change it. Those involved are comfortable with the informal nature of the arrangement, with no pressure to reach formal agreement on a particular set of issues. This format ensures low transactions costs for all involved, including the host country, and ensures that the agenda remains flexible, so that it can be readily adapted to relevant issues of the day. Such a format is well-suited for navigating the uncertainty and unpredictability associated with the changing global order, as it allows the participating countries to address emerging issues and new developments.

One question that could be considered is the role of the African Union Commission (AUC). In many comparable strategic partnerships, the AUC has been included in an observer-type role. The AUC has, as part of its reform process, played an increasingly important coordinating role in Africa's strategic partnerships. The AUC seeks to reduce the transaction costs of managing the various strategic partnerships in which Africa is engaged; it also facilitates the process of developing common African positions on a range of issues. As highlighted above, key features of the African–Nordic foreign ministers' meetings that appear to be appreciated by all involved are its informality and the fact that these meetings do not attempt to be a continent-wide arrangement. Provided these features are safeguarded, including the AUC in an observer role may add additional value to the foreign ministers' meetings.

Additionally, this report has also examined what the sum total of African–Nordic bilateral relations in the areas of trade, development, peace and security and multilateral cooperation reveals about the status of the overall relationship.

A special feature of the African–Nordic relationship has been solidarity and political commitment to self-determination, and support for African agency and empowerment, inter alia through development cooperation. Development cooperation has historically been an important element, but an increasing share of such assistance is now channelled as earmarked funding through multilateral institutions. Moreover, core funding to multilateral institutions is increasingly being directed toward thematic priorities such as climate change, migration or health.

Although the proportion of African–Nordic trade and investment is relatively small, compared to Africa's larger trade partners and the total volumes of Nordic trade and investment, it is nevertheless an important element in the relationship, and one that is likely to become increasingly prominent. Among the especially promising areas here are the blue economy, renewable energy and new technologies.

In the field of political and diplomatic relations, African–Nordic cooperation at the UN and in other multilateral fora has received special attention. Given the increasing tensions and rivalry among regional and global powers and the uncertainties and turbulence associated with a changing global order, African and Nordic countries have strengthened their cooperation to defend and safeguard a rules-based multilateral system, with the UN system at its centre. This has also resulted in significant Nordic support to the African Union, including in the field of peace and security.

Overall, the bilateral relations that have evolved between African and Nordic countries, coupled with the annual meetings of foreign ministers, show that the relationship between these two regions is grounded in a long history of solidarity and partnership. It is based on a diverse range of engagements across the political, peace and security, trade and investment and development cooperation spheres, as well as people-to-people contacts, education and cultural exchanges. Further, we may conclude that there is ample scope for continued growth and innovation in the future – especially in areas such as peace mediation, the blue economy, renewable energy and new technologies.

The Russian war on Ukraine has generated additional attention to the need to defend an international system based on the UN Charter and related international legal principles and provisions that recognise the sovereignty of states and the illegality of using force except in self-defence or for enforcement actions sanctioned by the UN Security Council. This is likely to be a prominent item on the agenda of the forthcoming African–Nordic foreign ministers’ meeting. Russia’s readiness to wage war on another sovereign state in order to pursue its own political, security and economic interests has significantly altered the threat landscape for the Nordic countries, prompting Finland and Sweden to apply for NATO membership. Many African countries have voted in favour of UN resolutions condemning the Russian war on Ukraine, but others have chosen not to take a position as a way of trying to remain non-aligned.

Several African countries have also expressed concern that the war in Ukraine distracts attention, and diverts resources, from African conflicts and crises that deserve equal attention, also introducing inequality in the treatment of refugees that undermines existing agreements and does not bode well for global cooperation. Seen together with inequalities in the distribution of Covid-19 vaccines and concerns regarding the climate finance dimension of the Paris Agreement, a negative side-effect of the changing global order is the risk that the weakening of the multilateral system seems to be accompanied by growing inequality among the countries of the Global South and North. This is an issue that the African–Nordic meetings of foreign ministers are well positioned to address.

The war in Ukraine has highlighted the importance of regular African–Nordic foreign ministers’ meetings as a forum where such new developments, and their implications for African, Nordic and global peace, security and socio-economic development, can be discussed. It also shows the value of the informal nature of this arrangement, with open dialogue on emerging issues, and the opportunity for the participating countries to explain their positions with a view to enhancing mutual understanding.

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See [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/africa-eu-partnership\\_en#header-3723](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/africa-eu-partnership_en#header-3723). Various references were made to high-level meeting that demonstrate this.



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