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Introduction

Every year on 25 May the world celebrates Africa Day. This day is also called African Freedom Day and is dedicated to the anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity, established by 30 African leaders on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). This organization was created to ensure full autonomy of African countries. By the decision of the UN, this day was declared Africa Liberation Day.

Modern Africa is the fastest growing and youngest region of the world, which in the coming decades will determine the ways of development of mankind. In Russia, little is known about Africa. Although they know everything about Russia. Africa is the second largest continent and its population is almost one and a half billion people and growing rapidly.

The Second Russia-Africa Summit and the Russia-Africa Economic and Humanitarian Forum held in St. Petersburg on 27-28 July 2023 was a major event in Russian-African relations, designed to strengthen multifaceted cooperation between Russia and African countries. During this historic international political event, priority areas of economic co-operation were identified, and official delegations and business representatives of African countries expressed a high interest in developing, deepening and intensifying co-operation with Russia.

Africa believes in Russia. There is a growing force of attraction between our country and the African continent. Our relations are being rethought. Mechanisms of mutual partnership are being strengthened. Joint efforts to meet the challenges of modernity are united.

The Association for Economic Co-operation with African Countries in co-operation and with the information support of the electronic information and analytical publication «New Eastern Outlook» has decided to publish a unique printed magazine in which well-known politicians, diplomats, experts, journalists and scientists consider the main aspects and specific strategic directions for the development of mutually beneficial Russia-Africa co-operation.

We will talk about the benefits that such co-operation can bring, as well as the problems that may arise in its implementation. On the pages of the magazine the reader will find the answer to the questions: why Africa needs Russia and Russia needs Africa, why Africans keep faith in Russia and do not believe in the West, what Africa lives on today, how the mentality of its inhabitants is changing, how and why the system of neo-colonialism on the Black Continent is collapsing. Happy Africa Day, dear reader!

Author: **Alexander Babakov**

Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation:

Africa is the center of the world majority



Today, Africa is the most dynamically developing continent on the planet. The enormous human potential, intellectual resources, emerging production complexes and significant logistical opportunities create the basis for the advanced social and economic development of African countries in today's conditions.

For Africa, the 20th century was a century of liberation from colonial rule and the formation of independent states across the continent. In the 21st century, these countries are becoming the foundation of a new world order where there will be no room for foreign dictates, interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, or disregard for national values and traditions. It is extremely

important that on this basis a world majority is being shaped, with a significant role played by the states of the very African continent. The participation of three African countries in the world's main inter-state organization, BRICS, demonstrates the ever-increasing role of Africa in addressing global political, economic and humanitarian challenges.

Parliamentary diplomacy plays a special role in strengthening the world majority. In this regard, both chambers of the Federal Assembly of Russia are in constant dialogue with MPs from each and every African country. International parliamentary forums and conferences, inter-state agreements between the parliaments of Russia and African countries, and inter-parliamentary cooperation programs lay the institutional foundations for the formation of political and legislative conditions for the development of Russian-African relations. These ties are being strengthened across the board, in all spheres and areas of activity without exception, from security issues to the implementation of humanitarian projects.

Today, Russia is working to ensure its systemic presence on the African continent. Our economic cooperation is developing dynamically, infrastructure projects are being implemented, trade turnover is growing, and scientific, educational, cultural and outreach contacts are constantly expanding and deepening. It is especially important that we see the readiness of African states to reach a completely new level of cooperation on the economic front through the transition from trade to the exchange of technologies, the establishment of joint ventures and Russian enterprises on the African soil.

It is important to note that Russia's co-operation with African countries, as with all our partners in the emerging system of world majority, is taking place on a mutually beneficial basis, respecting the priorities and values of each party. On their part, African countries are already providing significant support to Russia in the political, social and economic spheres, which is extremely important in the context of illegal Western sanctions against our country.

African countries are not just demonstrating interest in cooperation with Russia. They see in this the continuity of the policy of the Soviet Union, which is intended to become the basis for a full-fledged strategic partnership in the system of the new world order for the prosperity of our countries and peoples.

PART 1

Russia-Africa: defending common interests

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Mikhail Bogdanov: "The African continent is not an arena of confrontation between major international players, but a new, growing, diverse, distinctive, global pole of power"



How are Russian companies operating in Africa in the new geopolitical environment? To what extent is Russia willing to cooperate with African countries in such promising areas as digital technologies and peaceful nuclear energy? What has changed in the work of a diplomat over half a century? We spoke to Mikhail Bogdanov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and Africa, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia.

– Mikhail Leonidovich, in connection with the intensification of our country's foreign policy course towards Africa, how quickly will we be able to achieve the set pace, and what will it depend on?

– In fact, the pace has already picked up and, in my opinion, it is quite impressive: in the last five years, two full-scale summits and as many parliamentary conferences have been held in the Russian-African space, the Action Plan of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum for 2023-2026 has been adopted, the first Russian-African conference of foreign ministers is being

prepared, a number of bilateral and multilateral documents on high-level cooperation have been signed, trade turnover is growing, and the number of African students studying in our country is increasing.

The extent to which we will be able to maintain - and preferably increase - this momentum will depend on many factors, but above all on the political will of the parties, the creativity and tenacity of the business community, and the enthusiasm of the public. And - last but not least - on external factors, which are not always favorable: it is enough to recall the coronavirus pandemic, which recently seriously slowed down the dynamic development of Russian-African relations. Nevertheless, we at the Russian Foreign Ministry are optimistic, and we see the same spirit in our partners.

– In your opinion, what are the main results of last year's Russia-Africa Summit for the participating countries in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres?

– The Second Russia-Africa Summit, held in St. Petersburg on 27-29 July last year, demonstrated the participants' firm commitment to further strengthening cooperation, making it strategic and focusing on effective solutions to the priority tasks of our partnership. We confirmed the fundamental convergence of our approaches to building a fairer world order based on equality and the principles of international law.

At the same time, Russia's priority is to support the strengthening of the sovereignty of African states and to ensure the national security of the continent's states. Progress in these areas, taking into account the cultural and historical peculiarities of African countries, as opposed to the Western policy of neo-colonialism, became a transversal idea of the St. Petersburg Summit, a doctrinal consolidation of our common attitude towards the continent as an emerging centre of a multipolar world.

Within the framework of the Summit and in accordance with its results, agreements were reached on the whole spectrum of Russian-African cooperation and the main vectors of future joint work in the political, trade, economic, investment and humanitarian spheres were defined. They were summarized in the aforementioned Action Plan of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum for 2023-2026, and the conference of foreign ministers scheduled for this autumn will assess the progress made, make any necessary adjustments and clarify the way forward.

– Who are our main competitors in Africa? And what can we offer to the continent that others cannot?

– World interest in Africa is strong and growing, as a "continent of the future" with truly inexhaustible natural and human resources and an increasingly large and, in many respects, highly profitable market. Competition among external actors for a place under the African sun is therefore fierce, and increasingly involves representatives of the "global East and South", in addition to the traditional contenders represented by the states of the "collective West": China, India, Turkey, the countries of the Persian Gulf, South-East Asia and Latin America. As you can see, the list is long and growing.

Russia is not afraid of fair competition and is ready for it, offering Africa first and foremost the role of a serious guarantor of stability and security, as well as its traditional and newly developed competences, some of which are unique. Judging by the reaction of our African partners, there is a growing demand for our country's help in the Sahara-Sahel region and throughout the continent.

What we categorically reject is the West's attempts to tell Africans with whom they can and cannot do business. Fortunately, Africans themselves are increasingly rejecting such neo-colonial attempts.

In developing our cooperation with African countries, we start from the principle that the African continent is not an arena of confrontation between major international players, but a new, growing, diverse, distinctive and global pole of power. Russia is ready to actively help strengthen the existing potential of African countries without imposing political conditions or offering unsolicited advice - this is our competitive advantage.

– For more than two years now, the whole world has been living in a new geopolitical reality that has changed dramatically since the beginning of the special military operation. How has this affected the work of Russian companies in Africa, many of which have been sanctioned?

– Today's realities require a change in our relations. The unprecedented political and economic anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the "collective West" require a significant reconfiguration of many parameters and mechanisms of cooperation with African countries. Work is underway at all levels to create new instruments. First and foremost, this concerns trade and economic relations. We are talking about the establishment of transport chains, systems for foreign trade payments and ensuring food, energy, sanitary and epidemiological security in Africa.

Even in these difficult conditions, work is continuing vigorously in specific areas, including the construction and modernisation of infrastructure and industrial facilities, the exploration, extraction and transport of minerals, the promotion of Russian developments in medicine and digital services, and the expansion of the supply of Russian products. Not only are our exports growing, but so are imports from African countries. The federal executive authorities, in cooperation with our embassies, are actively supporting Russian business in its work on the African track, including the search for promising areas for effective access to the continent's markets.

At the same time, major Russian economic players have been operating successfully in Africa for a long time, and the current world situation only favours further growth of their interest in this continent. We also see a reciprocal interest on the part of African partners, especially in direct investment from Russia based on domestic technologies applicable to African conditions.

– How ready is Russia today to cooperate with African countries in new promising areas such as digital technologies, peaceful nuclear and space exploration, and how much does Africa need it?

– Moscow consistently favours the development of the full range of economic relations with Africa, both with individual states and regional groupings and, in the near future, with the emerging African Continental Free Trade Area. At the same time, there are no sectoral or thematic restrictions on the Russian side's cooperation with these countries - on the contrary, Russia is focused on strengthening the technological sovereignty of African countries along the entire chain of competencies - expertise, adaptation and transfer of technologies, establishment of enterprises and training of specialists.

Recently, the focus of our economic cooperation has gradually shifted to high technologies. Examples include the creation of a national satellite communications and broadcasting system in Angola and the construction of a space tracking station in South Africa. We are discussing cooperation projects with a number of African states in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and in space exploration and the application of its results. We see great interest on the part of Africans in these areas and we are endeavouring to meet it as far as possible.

The same applies to information and communication technologies. Russian ICT companies offer package solutions in the areas of digitization, development of telecommunications networks, creation and implementation of mobile operating systems, radio control and cyber security. At the same time, some of our partners' developments are of interest to us, as demonstrated by

the week-long Russian-African seminar held at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow at the end of last year.

– After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a number of our embassies on the African continent were closed. We are now actively working to reopen them. In which countries have diplomatic missions already been opened or are they planned to be opened in the near future?

– Following the results of the Second Russia-Africa Summit, the leadership of our country set itself the task of expanding Russia's diplomatic presence on the African continent - not only in those countries where it was reduced in the 1990s. Just before the New Year, our embassy was opened in Burkina Faso, and another Russian diplomatic mission will soon be opened in Equatorial Guinea. Several more "points" are in the pipeline - we will let you know exactly where they will open as soon as we are ready.

– This year marks the 50th anniversary of your diplomatic career. What has changed in the work of a diplomat over these years?

– Half a century is a long time in human terms, and in some ways almost everything has changed. Suffice it to say that when I joined the Foreign Office, a diplomat's main "working tools" were a ballpoint or ink pen (or a typewriter for the more skillful) and a landline telephone. Nowadays, people in our profession cannot imagine life without a computer, a mobile phone with a wide range of functions and an Internet connection that is as stable and fast as possible.

The relationship between the various components of a diplomat's work has also changed. Our profession has become much more open and public, which of course has its advantages and disadvantages. The importance of universalism has grown: not in the sense that a diplomat should know and be able to do a little bit of everything, but in the sense of deeper and more thorough economic, legal and media qualifications. What has not diminished is the ability to establish and maintain personal contacts, as well as knowledge of foreign languages and their use in work. What has remained constant is a high level of professionalism within the framework of functional and country specialization, a broad and in-depth knowledge of international issues, general erudition, and an interest in the history and culture of the countries and regions in which the diplomat is based or active.

– To end our conversation, our traditional question. What is Africa like? What attracts and fascinates you? What is it like for you?

– Africa is huge, literally immense, very diverse and at the same time has common features for different regions and peoples. Many things attract and fascinate me: the power and beauty of nature, the richness of flora and fauna, the abundance of monuments of ancient civilizations, but above all - the

inexhaustible vitality of the people who inhabit the continent, their worldly wisdom, common sense and ability to overcome difficulties and hardships, to find joy and pleasure in the ordinary. In fact, this is what attracted me to the continent and has never let me go. I am always ready to fly to Africa, to receive guests from Africa and to meet Africans.

– Dear Mikhail Leonidovich, we thank you for the interesting and detailed conversation and hope to meet and talk with you many more times.

Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of «New Eastern Outlook»

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

His Excellency Mr. Mzuvukile Maqetuka: “BRICS should be seen as an organization that will strengthen multilateralism and help the UN to be a cementing force that keeps the balance in the world”



My interlocutor today is Mr Mzuvukile Maqetuka, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of South Africa to the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. Our conversation has turned out to be extensive, for we have wanted to discuss a lot, and also topical, interesting and, in some places, very heartfelt. How have we managed to fit it all into one interview? You will find the answer right below.

– Mr Ambassador, South Africa hosted the BRICS Summit last year. The Russian president, who for some reason did not attend, later said that President Cyril Ramaphosa “had brilliantly conducted BRICS”, and praised the South African leader’s diplomatic skills. The issue of BRICS enlargement was not an easy one to resolve, “and he did it; he did it so politely, tactfully, coming back to the same issue again and again”. How

will the BRICS enlargement affect the political and economic balance of power in the world?

– Interesting question. The reasons why President Putin did not attend the 15th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in August 2023 are known. It is the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. As a signatory to the Rome Statute of the ICC, South Africa is well aware of its obligations. Both Cabinet and President Ramaphosa have said that they would work on two points in relation to this issue. They have been communicating with all stakeholders from the outset in preparation for the Summit. As a result, our presidents discussed whether Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin would come. Of course, President Ramaphosa also communicated with other leaders of the BRICS member states. Therefore, the Russian President did not personally participate in the work of the summit.

We remember Putin's words that the summit was perfectly organized. He stressed the role of President Ramaphosa. In this context, I wanted to explain how the BRICS Summit was organized in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

As for the second part of your question about how the BRICS enlargement will change the political and economic balance of power in the world... I would like to put it in a little different way. I think we should change the narrative a little, that is, we should ask the question—what was the purpose of BRICS? I think we should not focus so much on the question of balance of power. The balance of power between who and who?

I believe that multilateralism and the UN should be the linchpin for resolving conflicts in the world. Therefore, BRICS should be seen as the organization that will strengthen multilateralism and help the UN to be the cementing force for balance in the world. That is why the theme of the ongoing Johannesburg Summit was “BRICS. Africa. Sustainable Development”. We can put it this way: the BRICS will be the organization of countries that strive to build a better world and pay attention to development issues. And South Africa, as a member of the global South and BRICS, sees the development issues as the mainstream.

So, it is very important to develop BRICS. In this context, we should look at the establishment of the New Development Bank that was set up to build the infrastructure of the members of the organization. It can be seen as one of the development institutions.

– The case your country has brought against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has already been described by international lawyers as “unprecedented” because “it is the first time that Israel can be tried under a treaty designed to prevent future acts similar to the extermination of Jews during the Second World War”. How do you see the prospects for this case?

– I think this trial is like throwing a baby into the water. 15 judges have already delivered their verdict. And South Africa is satisfied with the outcome. Now our country wants to see what the international community will do with the ICJ ruling. We know, of course, that some countries have taken the process further. The main issue for everyone now is the impasse between Palestine and Israel, the way out of which is the creation of two states. An independent State of Palestine must be created to coexist with the State of Israel. Of course, we understand all the difficulties involved in the two-state solution. The question is how to create them. I believe this should be a common task for the whole world. Under no circumstances should we allow the destruction of one nation by another. That will not lead to a solution.

– Mr. Ambassador, President Ramaphosa, in his closing remarks at an African National Congress rally in Boksburg on 30 January this year, warned supporters and citizens of a systematic campaign against South Africa following the filing of a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. In his view, there will be systematic campaigns of retaliation for South Africa’s actions, and, in particular, external efforts may focus on the country’s domestic politics and the upcoming elections, with the aim of achieving regime change. To what extent are such fears realistic, and do you think that such a trend (external interference in elections) is already a bad global trend?

– Regarding the complaint we filed with the ICJ, President Ramaphosa said that the response we received was expected. Of course, Israel will not sit back and watch as it is taken to the International Court of Justice. The very decision to file the case was met with mixed reactions from the international community.

As for interference in South Africa’s internal affairs, that is a different matter. But, as I said, South Africa would not stand by and watch the fate of the Palestinian people. Especially given that South Africa is governed by the African National Congress, a party that has had a brotherly and sisterly relationship with the Palestine Liberation Organization for decades. You only

have to look at the statements the ANC made 40 to 50 years ago about the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people. The situation has not changed. Our country supports all efforts to resolve the problem between Palestine and Israel through diplomatic and peaceful means.

– South Africa is currently the country with the most developed military-industrial complex on the African continent. What are the prospects for the development of military co-operation between our countries in the coming years?

– Our country has the most diversified economy and the most advanced banking and financial system in Africa. And indeed, South Africa's military-industrial complex is one of the most developed on the continent. Our military contingent is involved in all peace initiatives on the African continent. This includes the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where we have lost seven soldiers in recent months. We have soldiers in northern Mozambique where terrorists are fighting.

South Africa has military agreements and military relations with many countries around the world. Of course, we have extensive relations with the Russian Federation, including military relations. These relations are developing, and our leaders are promoting them.

– Mr. Ambassador, recently South Africa and Belarus have been increasing trade and economic co-operation with a focus on agriculture and food security. What other sectors are the most promising for expanding co-operation?

– Indeed, South Africa has very strong relations with Belarus, where I visit at least once a year. About 2,000 young people from our country have been trained in Belarus in agriculture, mechanical engineering, medicine, and information technology. The latest group, about one hundred students, returned home last year.

At the end of November 2023, Deputy Foreign Minister of South Africa Alvin Botes visited Minsk. The purpose of the visit was both to strengthen political relations and to explore opportunities for greater economic co-operation. For example, Minsk Tractor Plant plans to open an assembly plant in South Africa. There are companies in Belarus interested in investments in construction and

in the development of so-called smart cities. The embassy promotes such dialogue and cooperation in every possible way.

Belarus would like to import black tea from South Africa, and the relevant negotiations with Beltamozhservice are already underway. Belarusians are also planning to import tinned and perishable products. Belarus is also interested in importing South African wines. Therefore, we are optimistic about the development of economic and trade relations with the Republic of Belarus.

– Russian energy companies are becoming increasingly interested in co-operation in power generation. This applies to coal-fired power plants, the hydroelectric power plant segment, etc. To what extent is your country interested in this? Are any specific projects already underway?

– As far as cooperation in the energy sector is concerned, we should mention a major R3.7 billion project between Gazprom and PetroSA to modernize an oil refinery. This is a very attractive project for us, given the problems South Africa is experiencing in the energy sector.

We know that Russian companies are interested in co-operation in the hydropower sector, in particular, RusHydro has shown such interest. We also know about the investments of Russian companies in manganese ore mining, and we know about your companies that want to invest in solar power generation in South Africa. So, in the energy sector, there is indeed co-operation at different levels.

– South Africa is one of the five largest trade partners of the Russian Federation on the African continent. For example, not so long ago the Russian Kirov Plant has started exporting construction and road building equipment to South Africa. However, the share of South Africa in the total trade turnover between our countries is still small, and we can say that there is a potential for development. What would you highlight as the most promising niches for co-operation?

– One of the successful areas is agricultural trade. These are supplies of fruit, especially citrus, and wine. South Africa is the seventh-largest importer of wine into Russia. South African wine competes with the best wines in the world. And South African fruit imports to the Russian Federation rank third after Turkish and Egyptian fruit. We are proud of this cooperation. And when winter comes to Russia, we have virtually no competition for citrus supplies.

The Russia-South Africa Business Council, which is dedicated to strengthening economic and trade relations, has seven subcommittees. And the agriculture sub-committee is one of the most active, and cooperation in the area of fruit and vegetable supplies is growing. There is a very strong representation of Russian companies in the mining sector in South Africa. And, as I mentioned earlier, they are doing very well in manganese mining.

In fact, the trade turnover between our countries is quite small. But the potential for development is enormous. Therefore, the Business Council and the governments of our countries have a lot of work to do to increase the volume of trade turnover. I repeat, the potential does exist.

– Mr. Ambassador, you are not only a diplomat but also a writer. I am also a bit of a writer, so I would like to ask my favorite question. In your books you describe your memories of your childhood, youth and adulthood in your hometown, its people, culture and history. Can we hope that one day we will have the pleasure of reading stories about your life and work in Russia?

– I am extremely grateful for this question. One of my books, “Jim tired of Jo’Burg”, is now being translated into Russian. I write fiction, not biography. I prefer to make up stories, it is easier for me.

– Then perhaps one of your stories will take place in Russia?

– Perhaps. I cannot deny it, as Russia itself is a fantastic landscape for a writer. In all the cities I visit, I always talk to library staff. For example, this week I attended an event dedicated to the 250th anniversary of Pushkin’s birth at the Rudomino Library of Foreign Literature. And in 2021, I participated in an event dedicated to the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dostoevsky. But, to be honest, recently I have been a little confused, as I realised that I had not read anything by Pushkin.

– At the end of our conversation, we would like to ask our traditional question, which you have anticipated to some extent with your previous answer. What do you like best about Russia? What has touched your soul?

– Yuliya, I have a passion for cultural heritage. And Russia gives me that, I mean cultural heritage, to the full. When I first came to Moscow, I stayed on the fifth floor of the Lotte Hotel. Every morning I would wake up and look at the Moscow landscape. And the most beautiful things for me were the domes of the Orthodox churches. One morning I even counted them, there were about twenty. I became interested in how Russia has made Orthodoxy part of its cultural heritage.

My other passion is libraries and bookshops, which are everywhere in Moscow. But if you ask me which is my favourite library among those I have visited, you will be surprised. It is the Belinsky Library in Ekaterinburg.

– ***Why?***

– You know, it is not the most beautiful building. It is not modern. But it is one of the best libraries in terms of organization. When I come to Ekaterinburg, I always visit it. There is something there that attracts me.

Of course, I like the National Library of the Republic of Tatarstan in Kazan. It is modern, large, beautiful. But the Belinsky Library is something different. I am also very attracted to the M.I. Rudomino Library of Foreign Literature.

What else do I like? The general development of the infrastructure. Especially in Moscow. I have often said that Moscow is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It has not only does a well-developed infrastructure—this infrastructure is well-maintained. That’s what attracts me to Russia—the heritage, the culture, and the development issues.

– ***Dear Ambassador! Our magazine expresses our appreciation to you for the honor you have done us, and for the interesting and detailed conversation. We wish our countries further mutually beneficial co-operation in various fields and the strengthening of friendship and mutual understanding.***

Yuliya NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of the «New Eastern Outlook»

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Oleg Ozerov: “Russia is a reliable partner, ready to assist in ensuring all dimensions of sovereignty and security of African States”



Today my interlocutor is Oleg Borisovich Ozerov, Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry and Head of the Secretariat of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum.

Our conversation turned out to be serious and topical. We touched on the question of how Russian-African cooperation can withstand the West’s harsh external pressure, talked about security challenges and discussed the catastrophic loss of the West’s position on the African continent. And Oleg Borisovich also spoke on promoting a unifying policy line on the African continent.

– Oleg Borisovich, you have recently stated that “the West is catastrophically losing ground on the African continent, not only in terms

of material investments. First of all, it is losing its moral authority.” Are we succeeding in filling the niche that is being vacated? What immediate steps do we need to take in the very near future? And what is already being done?

– In general, the West is rapidly losing its position as a global hegemon, not only in Africa. However, this is not about filling a niche. Russia, unlike Western countries, opposes turning Africa into an confrontation arena and does not force its partners to chose one country over another respecting sovereign right to decide their policy. In the context of fundamental changes in the existing system of the world order, we promote a unifying political line on the African continent. We are against “hidden agendas” and “double standards”. Violations of international law and interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, including under the pretext of combating terrorism or under the slogan of preventing extremist manifestations, are absolutely unacceptable. We are well aware of how sensitive our African friends are to this aspect, and we are building our relations with the continent by offering our partners cooperation that is based on equal, mutual respect of interests and benefits. In this context, we are working first of all on developing our ties with Africa, which gained impetus during the second Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg, and we continue our efforts to qualitatively implement the decisions of the summit. I believe that the achievement of our goals will be facilitated by the application of a systematic, comprehensive approach, according to which Russia is a reliable partner ready to assist in ensuring all dimensions of the sovereignty and security of African States.

– Last year, Russia’s trade turnover with African countries increased by more than 40%. The result, at first glance, is not bad, but there is certainly the potential to increase it many times over. In which areas does economic cooperation show the best results, and which still need to be “pulled up”?

– Today, Africa is a fast-growing promising and large market where demand far outstrips supply. We are also interested in increasing imports of new products from the continent in addition to tea, coffee, cocoa and tropical fruits. Under these conditions, we and our African partners have an opportunity to unlock complementary economic potentials. I would like to emphasize that Africa can always count on Russia as a reliable ally in its endeavor to obtain

modern technologies, train the personnel and build up the scientific reserve necessary for an economic breakthrough.

We are ready to work in specific strategic areas, including construction and modernization of energy facilities, subsoil exploration, production, transportation of hydrocarbons and other minerals, field development and exploitation, implementation of infrastructure projects for construction of new and modernization of existing industrial facilities, export of education, medical solutions, digital services, expansion of supplies of Russian machinery, agricultural, chemical and pharmaceutical products. We are ready to purchase products manufactured on the continent. In this regard, we actively assist Russian business in working on the African track, participating in congress and exhibition events, organizing business missions, searching for promising areas to enter the continent's markets in cooperation with our embassies.

– Africa faces many security challenges, of which the fight against terrorism and the food crisis can be considered paramount. How is cooperation in these areas developing between Russia and the continent's states?

– First of all, I would like to note that Russia is in favor of fully consolidating the efforts of the international community to form a broad anti-terrorist front with the participation of all states on the basis of the United Nations Charter. As you know, we have had bitter experience of all the negative consequences of the use of international terrorism to undermine sovereignty and territorial integrity. I am referring to the conflict in the North Caucasus. The root causes of terrorism are not always related to poverty and socio-economic issues. Terrorism is often used as a tool of third forces to achieve foreign policy goals, as in Syria, for example. In that country, as a result of Russia's decisive actions, it has been possible to stabilize the situation and develop the parameters of a peace process. Thus, the Russian Federation has unique experience in confronting both internal and external terrorist threats and is ready to actively share it with African friends. We are already providing counter-terrorism assistance at the request of states such as the CAR, Mali and Burkina Faso, including law enforcement training in the Russian Federation. We are seen as a reliable "security provider" in Africa.

As for such an important issue as ensuring Africa's food security, our country confirms its reputation as a reliable international supplier of agricultural goods. I would like to note that Russia has taken a number of specific steps to support African friends. For example, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, the CAR, Eritrea, Mali, Somalia and Zimbabwe have received Russian grain, the transfer of which was announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin during the St. Petersburg summit. Free shipments of fertilizers were made to Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi and Zimbabwe. We are ready to go further and create conditions for African countries to expand their own food production. This includes not only the supply of fertilizers, but also agricultural machinery and agrotechnology.

At the same time, the Collective West continues its active campaign to blame Russia for the current crisis situation on the world food market. However, we know that the continent is well aware of the real reasons for the current difficulties caused by the short-sighted policy of the Western countries themselves.

– Western pressure on our African partners seeking to develop cooperation with us has not abated. But we know that a spring always compresses to a certain limit and then collapses. How can we prevent this further compression? Will Russia and all progressive humanity have the strength to resist this process?

– Indeed, the build-up of Russian-African cooperation is taking place in the context of increasingly severe external pressure. The West is not going to give up its policy of domination, including on the African continent. Washington and its allies mimic the agenda of equal partnership and engagement, the rule of international law, and actively employ illegal unilateral restrictions and secondary restrictions as a tool to advance their policies and punish the disobedient.

Russia, responding to the request of its African friends, stands in solidarity with them in the need to oppose the Western "policy of robbery" expressed in new forms of colonialism. It is about strengthening the sovereignty of African states, as well as taking into account their national interests and cultural specificities, and consolidating the continent's position as an emerging center of a multipolar world.

– Oleg Borisovich, you took a very active part in the preparation and holding of the Russia-Africa Summit. Were your expectations from this event fully met? How active is the work being done now and in what areas?

– As you understand, the successful results of the summit are the results of the collective work of government agencies, business, and public organizations. I can safely say that the results of the St. Petersburg summit exceeded the most optimistic expectations. Together with the Africans, we developed the summit's final declaration, three sectoral declarations and the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum Action Plan for 2023-2026, which were approved by the leaders. We are currently working hard to fulfil the provisions of these documents. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, other agencies and organizations are focused on achieving tangible results in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres, some of them are already visible. For example, along with food supplies to the countries of the continent, business missions are being actively organized, and Russian embassies in Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea and trade missions in Nigeria and Ethiopia have resumed their activities. There are plans to further expand our country's diplomatic presence on the continent. It should also be borne in mind that this fall we plan to present the interim results of the work done during the first ministerial conference of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum with the participation of African foreign ministers in Sochi.

– During the Soviet era, a huge number of foreign students, including Africans, studied in our universities. Today, according to official data, their number has reached about 355,000. If we take into account that the population of Africa is almost 1.5 billion people, the figures are not high. How can we regain the lost positions today?

– I agree that cooperation with the countries of the African continent on the humanitarian track should be increased by providing more scholarships to Africans, opening branches of Russian universities, Russian Houses, secondary schools, and press centers in Africa. Thanks to the St. Petersburg Summit, work in this direction is actively progressing. In particular, the quota of state scholarships for African students was doubled in the 2023/2024 academic year, and a comprehensive network of Russian-language open education centers was launched in 27 African states. I would also like to emphasize the importance of training Russian Africanists and specialists in rare African languages, who are to become conductors of Russian policy on the continent. A number of universities (the Institute of Asian and African Countries at Lomonosov Moscow State University, St Petersburg State University, Moscow

State Institute of International Relations) are already training Africanist linguists, and from 2023, at the suggestion of the leadership of the IAAC at Lomonosov Moscow State University, some languages are proposed to be taught in schools.

– You have been to Africa many times. What is it like for you? What fascinates you most about it?

– Africa is, first and foremost, about people and their overflowing energy. People who share with us traditional values, ideas and views of the modern world order. Like Russians, African friends support the principles of justice and equality, respect for the national interests of all countries without exception, and the diversity of confessions and cultures. The most impressive thing is that we and our African partners have a common understanding of global processes taking place today. One cannot but admire the distinctive African culture and art, its brightness and colorfulness. I would like to point out that the similar worldview in Russia and Africa is the result of a long and difficult historical journey, full of suffering of peoples resisting external aggressors. The parallels between the Great Patriotic War and Africa's struggle against colonizers are self-explanatory.

– Oleg Borisovich, thank you for your interesting and frank answers to the questions. I hope our readers will have the pleasure of reading your interviews in our academic journal many more times.

Interviewed by Yulia Novitskaya, writer, journalist-interviewer

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Nikolay Novichkov: «Russia's wealth will be multiplied not only by Siberia and the northern seas, but also by the southern seas and shores in the African direction and in the global South in general»



The range of issues we discussed during our conversation with Nikolay Novichkov, Doctor of Sciences in Economics, member of the State Duma, was incredibly broad. We talked about Russia's competitive advantages over others on the African continent and the prospects of the digital ruble in our mutual settlements, as well as cultural and educational projects.

– Nikolay Vladimirovich, last autumn the State Duma set up 15 friendship groups with African countries. What tasks will they have to solve in the near future?

– Until recently, there were only two friendship groups with African countries in the State Duma. The first was responsible for interaction with the parliaments

of the Maghreb, and the second was responsible for the rest of the African continent, i.e. fifty countries.

In the spring of 2023, the “Russia-Africa” Inter-Parliamentary Conference was held, which had an excellent resonance and was very well received by our African partners. Co-operation with the African continent within the parliamentary dimension was significantly intensified. Thus, there was an urgent need to expand the number of friendship groups. Friendship groups have appeared with parliaments of individual countries, with parliaments of countries that are close to each other, even with parliaments of individual regions.

Now there are seventeen such groups. Their task is very simple – to do everything possible to promote the intensification of Russia’s co-operation with the African continent, not only within the parliamentary dimension, but in general. These tasks are political, economic and humanitarian in nature. Harmonization of our legislative activities is a separate issue. It is essential that the rules of law that apply in Russia and African countries, if not completely identical, should be understandable and make it possible to develop our co-operation.

– You mentioned the “Russia-Africa” Inter-Parliamentary Conference. Will it become an annual event from this year onwards? What issues are planned to be discussed at the next one?

– The Russia-Africa conference was followed by the Russia-Latin America conference, in which the parliaments of South America, Central America and the Caribbean took part. In our view, it was also successful. This region is also strategically important for co-operation at the present stage.

At the suggestion of the Chairman of the State Duma, Vyacheslav Volodin, an annual conference will be held with the countries, as we now say, of the global majority. We will invite parliaments from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Asia-Pacific region, certain friendly countries in Europe and countries of the Eurasian Economic Union. The Conference will be an annual event. In 2024, it will be held in the autumn. And the tasks are exactly the same: harmonizing legislative norms and identifying areas of priority development to support the Russian presence in the relevant regions of the world.

– African leaders are well aware that co-operation with Russia contributes to the development of their national economies and the

strengthening of their sovereignty. Russian industrial exports to the African continent grew by almost half last year. What steps should be taken to further increase growth rates?

– The tasks here, as you realize, are many. First and foremost, we are talking about the need for a systemic Russian presence on the African continent. This should involve not only bringing legislative norms under a common denominator, but also, for example, resolving security issues, training personnel, and resolving economic issues. We are well aware that the issue of the debt owed by African countries to the Russian Federation has not been fully resolved. There are certainly no particular problems there, but it exists nonetheless.

On the other hand, due to the illegal international sanctions imposed by the countries of the collective West, our mutual settlements with African countries have become more complicated. How can we switch to normal settlements so that they are efficient and understandable for economic agents? The question is open. Of course, it will be resolved, but it is still open.

We see great promise in the launch of the digital ruble. Digital currencies are an understandable tool for many African countries. In this case, we will not depend on the will of third unfriendly countries, but will be able to work directly. Some settlements are being converted into the currencies of friendly countries, primarily the currencies of the BRICS countries. We are moving away from such seemingly familiar currencies as the dollar, the euro or the British pound. And here we need to understand that these are not just currencies of countries that are waging a hybrid war against us. Settlements in so-called toxic currencies allow issuing countries to influence Russia's economic co-operation with Africa. We do not need that. Therefore, settlement issues will be solved, including by such creative means as the digital economy.

– There is a lot of talk now about the fact that the prospects for Russia-Africa relations should shift to the plane of industrial production: this is technology, this is education. At the same time, the specificity of the African continent is that each state is a special market with different economic indicators. Therefore, each country has its own, individual requests for co-operation in this or that industry?

– You're right. The African continent is 55 countries. That is more than a quarter of all the countries in the world. The priorities, demands and needs of each country are different. But at the same time, we realize that there are market-wide or region-wide issues. Therefore, having started working in a certain region, for example, in East Africa, and having worked out some technologies of interaction, these technologies can be extrapolated and exported to other countries of the same region. Given the fact that the Soviet Union and Russia have accumulated considerable experience of co-operation with all African countries and regions, we can go there from any side. This is, in fact, what is happening now.

To date, co-operation with the countries of North Africa has intensified: Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, and the Sahel region. We did not leave Ethiopia, Eritrea, Tanzania, we worked with them and continue to work with them. I am not talking about the Republic of South Africa – our strategic partner.

Therefore, I repeat once again, it is important to enter, work out the model, and then extrapolate and export it to different schemes, regions and situations.

– In one of your recent interviews, you said that Russia has one competitive advantage over others on the African continent – we can export security to African countries. Do you think we are already actively doing this?

– I can say unequivocally that we have a presence in Africa. And this is not even about exporting security, but about promoting the values of state national sovereignty. We treat each African country with respect – its state structure, as an established political system, certainly its traditions and culture. We are not trying to impose any external values. We respect the way each of these countries is developing. And it is respect for sovereignty that is the message with which we are going to Africa.

By and large, we are the only global power that is going with that message. The consequence of this is the independence of economic calculations and projects and, of course, ensuring the security of those countries with which we work. Therefore, recognizing the sovereignty of African states, their political, humanitarian and economic independence is a primary value and priority for us. And on this basis, we build all our relations, including security issues.

– Russian investors, including small and medium-sized businesses, are welcome in Africa. To what extent are Russian investors ready to invest?

– As you know, business is ready to work with any growing market. And the African market is definitely a growing market. Both because of population growth and the fact that new sectors of the economy are being formed in many countries. As we forecast that this growth will be significant, it is clear that the rate of return will be significant. Therefore, I am optimistic about Russian investors coming to Africa.

– Will support mechanisms for exporters to African countries be restructured?

– I think that there must be an instrument oriented exclusively at the African continent. I cannot say now on the basis of which development institute or department it will be created. But for me, as a practitioner, it is quite obvious that without this very comprehensive state supervision of Africa's development, we will get absolutely not what we would like and what our African partners are claiming. If we are talking about Russia's ambitious presence on the African continent, it is necessary to build the corresponding ambitious support institutions. I am sure that in the foreseeable future we will see a breakthrough in this respect and will build on this success.

– Any big economic projects always start with cultural and humanitarian projects. They are the first swallows that business follows. We have talked about business ties, let us now turn to cultural and educational ties. What can you say about this?

– We have to give credit to Rossotrudnichestvo and our educational block in the government – the quota for African students is constantly growing. Unfortunately, it is not as large as it was in the Soviet Union, but it is nevertheless quite noticeable. And the demand for Russian education in Russian on the African continent is enormous. Here we need to unambiguously build on our success in this direction, expand co-operation, and maybe even attract our corporations that want to work there. So that they also invest their resources in educational co-operation between Russia and African countries.

As for the cultural dimension, it is clear that we are actively promoting the Russian language, our traditions and values. In this respect, they go hand in hand with the educational process and economic co-operation. Undoubtedly,

there is a lot to work on here. But we cannot say that nothing is being done at all. Although, of course, we would like to do more.

– Nikolay Vladimirovich, and to conclude our conversation – our traditional question. What is your Africa like? What attracts you to it? What sticks in your memory most of all?

– For me, Africa is very big and diverse. For all that, it is extremely receptive to everything new. In this sense, it is certainly fascinating in every sense of the word. For me, Africa is part of my life, my political activity and part of my destiny. Therefore, I perceive the development of Russia's co-operation with Africa as one of the priority tasks of our country in the 21st century.

And, I am not afraid of this word, Russia's wealth will be multiplied not only by Siberia and northern seas, as Mikhail Vasilyevich Lomonosov said, but also by southern seas and southern shores in the African direction and in the global South in general.

– Nikolay Vladimirovich, thank you for an informative and topical conversation.

Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of the "New Eastern Outlook"

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Dmitry Viktorovich Kurakov: “Throughout Africa I feel the warmth of communication, the desire to help and the friendliest feelings towards Russia and Russians”



Almost the entire life of my interlocutor Dmitry Viktorovich KURAKOV, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Senegal and Gambia, is connected with Africa. In an exclusive interview, which he agreed to give to the “New Eastern Outlook”, we talked about the relationship between our countries in various spheres and areas, discussed the study of the Russian language in Senegal. I also asked him what he would talk about if he were offered the opportunity to write a book about his work in Africa.

– Dmitry Viktorovich, I will begin our conversation with a topical question – about the situation in Senegal. After the summer unrest, has the situation in the country stabilized? Have the universities already opened?

– If I may, I should like to begin by saying a few words about Senegal. In order to understand the current situation in the republic, in my opinion, it is necessary to turn to its history. In fact, Senegal is a kind of “island of stability” in West Africa. Since its independence (more than 60 years have passed), the republic has had only four presidents. The remarkable fact is that it is the only state in the sub-region where no coup d’état has been recorded. Senegal has gone through difficult periods in its history, but the internal political situation has never gone out of control.

The wave of protests in June-July 2023 was undoubtedly socio-economically motivated. The fact is that the country’s population is quite young: the average age is 19. The authorities pursue an active youth policy and are closely engaged in the issues of youth employment. As for local universities, this year they did not stop their work, education continued in the correspondence format. According to some data, the return to full-time education can be expected from the next academic year.

– You have been working in the Russian Foreign Ministry system since 1984, this year is an anniversary one. Were you born into a diplomatic family and, perhaps, your choice of profession was predetermined? As far as I know, you are not an Africanist by education. How did it happen that you connected your life with Africa?

– You’re probably right. My life choice was predetermined. I decided to become a diplomat as early as 5th grade. The example of my father, who had also worked on the African continent all his life, who came to Mali in 1962, almost immediately after the country’s independence, was decisive for me. Apparently, from early childhood (I was 6 months old when I was brought to Africa), I absorbed the “African spirit” – the colors, smells, sounds, and nature of this unusual continent in every respect.

– President Vladimir Putin on the margins of the Russia-Africa summit in a conversation with Senegalese leader Macky Sall called his country a reliable partner of Russia, emphasizing that: “Russia has great respect for the principled position of Senegal and other African states in favour of preserving stability and security in the world, the formation of a fairer model of international relations, and the peaceful settlement of conflicts.” How are relations between our countries developing now?

– Speaking about Senegal’s foreign policy, it should be realized that Dakar has always had quite close ties with France. Thus, the first president of Senegal, Léopold Sedar Senghor (1960-1980), was a member of the French National Assembly and a minister in the French government under Charles de Gaulle. The second president, Abdou Diouf (1981-2000), served as chairman of the International Organization of La Francophonie after completing his presidential mandate from 2003-2014. The son of Senegal’s third president Abdoulaye Wade (2000-2012), Karim Wade, was born in Paris and until January 2024 held French citizenship alongside Senegalese citizenship. Despite such strong, one could say, kinship ties with Paris, Senegal has been actively involved in the Non-Aligned Movement since independence. As is known, L.S. Senghor was the founder of the cultural-philosophical and ideological-political doctrine of Negritude, the theoretical basis of which is the concept of identity, self-value and self-sufficiency of the Negroid race. In 1966, during an interview with *Asia and Africa Today*, L.S. Senghor, in particular, gave the following definition of this doctrine: “It would be an irreparable loss to world civilization, which is being built by common effort, if any people or race did not make a distinctive contribution to it. It is necessary that all peoples, all races of the globe should be mutually enriched by the continuous exchange of their cultural values. Negritude theory thus poses the problem in terms of mutual exchange and dialogue, not in terms of opposition or racial hatred.”

Today, in various international forums, Senegal is in favor of preserving stability and security in the world, taking into account the views and positions of the African continent, and establishing a more equitable model of international relations. Our approaches to key issues on the global and regional agendas largely coincide. The bilateral political dialogue is showing positive dynamics. The current President of Senegal, M. Sall, has personally participated in two Russia-Africa summits. During his presidency, he has visited Russia five times, including in 2023 at the invitation of the head of Tatarstan R.N. Minnikhanov, who visited Kazan. It is important to note that the Senegalese leader, being an active supporter of peacemaking, was at the origin of the so-called “African Peace Initiative on Ukraine”. In general, we can confidently state that Russian-Senegalese multidisciplinary co-operation is developing at a good pace, and we have a mutual desire to further expand it in all areas.

– Last spring, in one of your interviews, you said that Russia wants to work and trade directly with Africa, without intermediaries. How are things in this respect in Senegal and Gambia?

– Recently, we have indeed recorded a significant increase in interest on the part of Russian business in working directly with Africa. As far as Senegal is concerned, we can state the presence of Russian products on the local market. Thus, according to Senegalese statistics, in recent years Russia has consistently been among the top ten countries from which Senegal imports goods. At the same time, our exports to the republic (up to 90 per cent) are based on oil and refined products, as well as foodstuffs, primarily cereals – the share of Russian wheat on the Senegalese domestic market is about 50 per cent.

We note with satisfaction the establishment of direct contacts between the regions of the two countries. In addition to the visit of a high-level Senegalese delegation to Kazan that I mentioned earlier, representatives of the Chelyabinsk Region visited Dakar in September 2023.

We are currently pinning certain hopes on a project promoted by the Moscow Region to establish a high-tech solid waste recycling facility in one of Senegal’s regional centers (“Touba”). A feasibility study of the project is currently underway and investors are being sought.

In addition, Senegal remains interested in Russian high technologies in the field of road safety, geolocalisation and goods delivery. The partners express their willingness to jointly promote startups, implement projects related to smart cities, flood control and environmental challenges, primarily related to the problems of wastewater treatment and utilization. The Russian experience of creating a taxation system for the self-employed is also in demand here.

In 2023, co-operation with the Gambia was actively developing. As part of the visit of a Gambian delegation led by the country’s Minister of Agriculture D. Sabali to the Vladimir and Belgorod regions in April 2023, visits to the Russian enterprises “Zelenaya Dolina”, “Yasniye Zori”, as well as JSC “Vladimir bread-baking complex” were organized.

– How often do delegations of Russian business representatives visit Senegal and Gambia? What projects are currently being implemented by Russia on the territories of these two countries?

– I confess that this does not happen as often as I would like. Currently, there are no major investment projects in Senegal and Gambia that would be promoted by Russian economic operators. However, I would like to highlight two exemplary initiatives in Senegal – the opening of a representative office in Dakar by the Russian company Novostal in 2023, as well as a Russian taxi

service under the Yango brand name, which has been successfully developing in the republic since December 2021.

– Is there a growing interest in Russian culture, literature and art in Africa?

– Our African partners have always shown interest in Russian culture and art. In particular, the National School of Cultural Arts and Crafts has been operating in Dakar since the 1960s. Its current leadership recalls the invaluable experience that was passed on by Soviet specialists to the first teachers of this school.

In this context, it is no coincidence that during the visit to Dakar in November 2023 of a delegation of one of the leading Russian federal educational institutions in the field of culture – the Russian Institute of Theatre Art – GITIS – Rector G.A. Zaslavsky signed an agreement with the school. Zaslavsky signed a memorandum of understanding with this educational institution, and already in December 2023 the delegation of the Russian university consisting of 6 people (2 teachers, 4 students) held concerts and master classes in vocal and choreography at the National Bolshoi Theatre of Senegal.

In addition, we would like to mention the first foreign artistic session of the School of Innopraktika and Russian Seasons, which aroused great interest among local specialists and was successfully held in Dakar in May 2022. Within the framework of this educational project, 16 talented painters and sculptors from 7 African countries: the Republic of Cameroon, the Republic of Guinea, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Senegal, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo were invited to the capital of Senegal to create works on a given theme under the guidance of 4 teachers of the Ilya Repin St. Petersburg Academy of Arts.

– Last November, the Russian Week of Maths, Physics and Computer Science was held in Senegal. In December, Russian language courses were launched in Dakar. How popular and in demand is the Russian language?

– The Republic of Senegal is one of the few African states where, despite strong Western cultural and educational influence, citizens have the opportunity to study Russian in a centralized way.

It is noteworthy that the teaching of Russian dates back to Senegal's independence in 1960, when the already mentioned first president of the country, L.S. Senghor, being a poet and a member of the French Academy, insisted that Russian be included in the school programme as a second foreign language. He said, in particular, that "Senegalese should be able to read the great African poet Alexander Pushkin in his native language".

Today, Russian is studied as a second foreign language and taught not only in the capital's educational institutions, but also in 50 lycées in the country's provinces – Kaolack, Fatick, Diourbel, Kolda, Tambacounda, Louga, Saint-Louis, Kaffrin, Tiara, Ziguinchor, Mbour, Matam and Thies. The Russian language is taught in local educational institutions by graduates of Soviet and Russian higher education institutions and their students who have received higher education at the Department of Slavic Languages and Civilizations of the Faculty of Philology and Humanities of the S.A. Diop University of Dakar, as well as at the Russian language department of the Faculty of Sciences and Technologies in Education of the University of Dakar (Fastef).

The total number of pupils studying Russian in local lyceums exceeds 6.6 thousand (ages 16-18), distributed in 234 classes. At the higher level, Russian is taught only at the University of Dakar (7 active teachers, more than 300 students).

The Senegalese side expresses great interest in expanding bilateral co-operation in the educational sphere. In particular, in December 2023, during my meeting with the Minister of National Education of Senegal, S.W. Ann, the latter welcomed our steps to spread the Russian language and culture in this African country, noting, despite the attempts of some Western states to dictate their rules of the "game", the "neutral position" of the republic with regard to the search for partners for co-operation in the field of education.

– Last November you hosted participants of the joint programme of AECAS and the Russian World Foundation "Russia-Africa: Friendship across Years and Distances". Its inspirer Galli Monastyreva told us about that trip in our interview. In your opinion, to what extent are such programmes in demand in Africa now?

– It was a very interesting and useful experience. Of particular interest to the local youth audience (and we managed to gather more than 200 students from the Technical University of Thiès) was the fact that the representative of

Roscosmos, test cosmonaut, Hero of Russia, Sergey Kud-Sverchkov, who spoke to them, was a real person who had been to space and from whom you could get comprehensive answers to your questions. In addition, the presentation was complemented by an appropriate video sequence. I believe that such initiatives bring people closer together and show in practice Russia's scientific and industrial potential and our achievements in science.

– If you were asked to write a book about your work in Africa, what chapters would you include? What would you tell about first?

– I think that the most important thing in my work is the experience of communicating with people, representatives of nationalities inhabiting different countries, each of which has its own customs and traditions, and its own methods of identifying outsiders on the basis of the principle of strangers and outsiders. It is this experience that I would like to pass on to all those who, either by duty or by the dictates of their hearts, have travelled to Africa and would like to achieve the desired results here.

– In your opinion, what qualities, not only professional but also human, should a diplomat possess?

– I am probably going to say a platitude, but without a good command of the language of communication in the country where a diplomat works, it is impossible to speak of his or her professionalism. In addition, it is in no way possible to treat the locals with condescension or disdain. A real diplomat should understand the local culture and traditions, understand the national cuisine and be ready to taste it, and, of course, study the country, including visiting local attractions.

– To conclude our conversation, I would like to ask our traditional question. What is your Africa like? What sticks in your mind the most?

– You know, this is probably one of the most difficult questions. I have had to work in many different regions, in southern, western, northern and central Africa, and the differences are so great that it is extremely difficult to identify anything in common, but one thing I have felt and still feel everywhere is the warmth of communication, the willingness to help and the friendliest feelings towards Russia and Russians.

– Dear Dmitry Viktorovich, thank you for the interesting conversation! We wish you success in your diplomatic career!

Yuliya NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of the “New Eastern Outlook”

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Galli Monastyreva: “We are pioneers, and we are tilling the soil



Our conversation with GALLI MONASTYREVA, the Director of Humanitarian Projects at the Association for Economic Cooperation with African countries, was both interesting and heartfelt. Only a person with a sincere love for their work, and for Africa, can talk about it as she does.

– Galli Germanovna, after several decades of relative quiet, cooperation between Russia and Africa is now undergoing, one could say, a second birth. What challenges does our country face along the way?

– In the AECAC, I am responsible for humanitarian projects. All major projects begin with cultural and humanitarian initiatives. We are the first swallows, whose flight heralds the arrival of businesses.

In my view, the main difficulty is that we in Russia do not know Africa at all. Many people think of it either as being like Russia was in the nineties, or as an extremely backward continent, with the natives running around in loincloths

and brandishing Kalashnikovs. And few people are interested in finding out how things really are there.

Africa is not the same today as it was 30 years ago. It has changed beyond recognition. Several generations of people who studied economics in the most prestigious Western universities have now reached maturity. Obviously, as far as technical development is concerned, things are not all that great for ordinary people. But the colonial powers were not concerned with making life better for the local population. They needed to have a good life themselves, and did all they could to achieve their goal.

– ***Absolutely, and that is the reason for the recent coups...***

– Both the young generation of leaders and the people say they are tired of feeding corrupt governments who serve the interests of the US and France. The local people want to control their own lives.

Doing business is always difficult, wherever you look. If we lack knowledge, then our work will always be challenging and sometimes even frightening. People need to travel to Africa, see it and get to know it for themselves, as online negotiations of the kind we are used to with European countries do not work there. The only way is to make personal contacts, and get to know the country for yourself. Believe me, if you are based in Moscow, Tomsk or Kazan, you will never be able to succeed in business projects in Africa.

Africa has a huge need for investment and offers great opportunities for doing business. This includes agriculture and food packaging, forestry, power generation, and processing of papayas and mangoes, which are more popular in every African country than potatoes are in ours! But Western companies export these fruits, process them into juice and sell them back to the African countries at many times the original price. According to the ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Congo, their incredibly green country even has to buy toothpicks from Europe.

In general, the main need is to develop medium-sized and especially small businesses. The main message we hear for state organizations is: “Come to us, and we will help you, and you us.”

Africa is now a very open continent for us. But the most important thing is to properly study the region which you are going to visit. Now, with the Internet, this is easy to do. To begin with, I would recommend you to read and listen to

an interview between Oleg Borisovich Ozerov, head of the Secretariat of the Russia–Africa Partnership Forum, and Irina Olegovna Abramova, Director of the Institute of Africa at the Russian Academy of Sciences. They describe the situation in a very clear and accessible way.

– *Some of the countries are very pro-Russian, while others are much less open...*

– To a greater or lesser extent, Russia provides support to Algeria, Angola, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Sudan and South Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. But almost all the countries in Africa welcome Russia.

In fact, in all the countries where we established humanitarian missions, we heard a single message: “Russia is the greatest and best country in the world! Putin represents strength and fairness!” Just the other day, in the Democratic Republic of Congo – a country which under its former leader Mobutu Sese Seko was far from the friendliest country to the USSR or Russia, we were told that the people of this country very much want Vladimir Vladimirovich to visit and that if he comes the whole country will come to the airport to meet him! All 112 million of them!

I always follow the principle that love must never be insistent. Countries are like people! I mean, when it comes to relationships, everything is very similar. If someone doesn't want to be friends with you at the moment, you just need to wait, and focus on those who do want your friendship, who are asking for it. Almost all the countries in Africa have great mineral wealth, but the people there are very poor because their colonizers reduced them to penury. And Africa, seeing great changes in Russia, and in its strong president, who was not afraid to follow his own course against the entire Western world, also wants real freedom.

And you should also know for sure that all Africans, absolutely without exception, are very open and good-natured.

In addition, I would recommend that Russian and African businessmen, before opening any business, whether in Africa or in Russia, should consult our association and the Russian embassies in these countries, and with the Africa Institute, which I mentioned earlier.

I would like to give a word of warning here. Lately, various companies have appeared, promising to help you with starting a business in Africa, but they

really just want to make money out of you. I would advise people in business to be very careful and check all the information carefully. In Africa, we also need people we can rely on, including state officials.

If your business is legally registered, and you pay all your taxes, then you will have no problems. Nobody will take anything from you, and you will be able to work and make a profit without interference.

– What can we bring to Africa? And what do they have to offer us?

– We can offer education and technology. Africa is a very young continent.

According to UN figures, Africa has a total population of more than 1.4 billion, of whom 799.5 billion (61.5 %) live in the continent's ten most populous countries. The median age in Africa is 18.6, compared with 31.2 in Asia and 41.7 in Europe. African women have an average of 4.7 children each, compared with a global average of 2.5.

In most of the countries, there are no university entrance exams. They have a huge number of young people who want to study. And most of them are interested in technology and engineering, areas where we are the best in the world. Geodesics, cartography, chemistry, gas, mining and metallurgy are all fields in which we have no rivals. The Africans want to learn from the best specialists, in order to become the best. So there is a huge demand. And it is great that our Russian universities are opening their doors and increasing their quotas for African students.

Almost all Africans speak three or four different languages. And, by the way, they learn Russian very quickly. Many high-ranking Africans still speak Russian because they once studied in Russian educational institutions. They perfectly well realize that we are not the same as the Chinese. We bring Africa technologies, and not money. We are ready to share our knowledge, experience and education. If other countries bring them fish, we bring them fishing rods so they can catch fish for themselves.

– Not long ago, you returned from your most recent trip. As part of the project “Russia and Africa: strength of friendship, through the years and across distance”, you visited Senegal and Mali. How busy and productive was your program?

– Incredibly busy! The main goal of our trip was to make presentations to students from these countries' leading universities, and tell them about the achievements of Russian science and education – the areas where Russia is a leader.

Unfortunately, in the last 30 years, Russia has lost a lot of ground in Africa. And young Africans do not know who Pushkin or Gagarin were. In Mali, which is a pro-Russian country, there is a Gagarin Street – it is the street where the Russian embassy is located. But in our meeting with some 600 people, only one knew who Yuri Gagarin was. He was a teacher who has studied in Russia.

As I have said, in the last 30 years three young and pro-Western generations have grown up, and they know nothing about Pushkin or Gagarin. For them, the first cosmonaut was an American, and the second was Chinese. We tell them how things really were, but we don't teach them how to live their lives, we just inform them of the facts.

We go to African countries to show the people that we are open and that we are always happy to share our knowledge and our technology with them. We tell them that they can come to Russia, get the best education in the world, and then return home better specialists and make their own countries better. Africa's young people are a true inspiration!

– I know that you were joined on that trip by pilot, cosmonaut and Hero of Russia Sergey Kud-Sverchkov. Is space exploration something that can bring Russia and Africa closer together?

– Definitely! Sergey is a good example of how, after graduating from a Russian technical university, a person can realize their dream of flying into space. He didn't succeed in becoming a cosmonaut the first time round, and he's quite honest about this. And we also tell our audiences about Tsiolkovsky and Korolyov, about Gagarin and Tereshkova. Sergey shows a film about life on the International Space Station. And by the end of the meetings, usually the whole room wants to be as intelligent, strong and determined as the Russian cosmonaut.

Students tell us that they are often visited by American and Chinese astronauts. But they have nothing to offer, they only tell their audience how great they are, while the Russians offer opportunities and dreams!

A couple of times in Mali I heard the question: we are at war, how can we start thinking about space? And Sergey answered that a person always needs to

dream. And who knows, maybe one of the students in the hall at the moment will one day become Mali's first cosmonaut.

You know, once the Ambassador of the Republic of Cameroon in Moscow told me that, as a young boy from a poor family, he was so inspired when he heard the news of Gagarin's flight into space on the radio that he went to get a higher education, became a diplomat and now works in Russia! That's wonderful!

When we meet young people on our trips, we teach them to seek out opportunities. And space helps them do this. On the one hand, it seems incredibly remote, and on the other hand... There he is, a real cosmonaut, and you can ask him questions and have your photograph taken with him.

Our trip was widely reported on by all the main media outlets, including radio and television. It was a great pleasure for us to be so welcome. I was also struck by the huge number of Russian flags. For example, after the victory over the terrorists in Kidal, the whole town went out into the streets, flying Malian and Russian flags. It was a great pleasure to see.

I would like to point out that our trips are supported by grants from the Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Support Fund and the Russian World foundation, with the support of the Africa Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretariat of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum.

– In the Russia-Africa summit in Saint-Petersburg, there was a big focus on education. That was now half a year ago. Has work begun in this area?

– Yes, it has, and very actively! For example, in Senegal unfortunately all the universities have been closed since September because the president is afraid of new student protests. But despite various difficulties, Russia is now very active in the Golden Continent, as the Africans themselves have taught me to call it – and I fully agree with them. It really is a golden continent, both in the literal sense, as it has the largest reserves of all the world's minerals, including gold and diamonds, and in the figurative sense, as it has a great deal of sunshine and happy people. Despite the difficult living conditions in many countries, Africans are incredibly joyful, welcoming and smiling people!

In particular, the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation has assigned different pedagogical universities to different countries. The teachers from these universities travel to the countries in question to teach Russian in newly-established open education centers.

The South Ural State University is paired with Mali. Voronezh State Pedagogical University is paired with the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. During our trip, we talked to these teachers. The local young people take great pleasure in learning Russian. In Russia, as well, a lot of work is being done in this area. Recently, Mendeleev University invited African teachers, including Russian language teachers, to Russia for two-week professional development courses, where they were taught new teaching methods and immersed in a Russian language environment. African teachers visited Belgorod University and Chechnya and were very impressed, as Amadou Keita, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the Republic of Mali, informed us. Exchange programs between Russia and Mali have been introduced, and that is great. I have to say that it is a very long time since we have seen so much activity in this area.

– And how long did it take you personally to explore and understand this continent? And is it really possible to fully get to know and understand Africa?

– That’s really a philosophical question... It would probably be better to ask a specialist in African studies. They dedicate their whole life to studying Africa – and not the continent as a whole, but a specific region or ethnic group. It is like the situation with Russia – we cannot study all 89 regions and 196 nationalities. And Africa has 54 countries and anywhere from 500 to 8,500 nationalities and ethnic groups.

To understand Africa, you really need to love the continent. And to begin with, you need to learn about it. It is a fascinating continent! I am not an academic specialist in African studies, I have a practical background. And I began by reading about its history and studying its economy...

I talk a lot to Africans living in Moscow, and travel a lot to Africa. And I can certainly say that if you have visited two or three countries, that does not mean that you know Africa. The countries in that continent are as different as Yaroslavl, Makhachkala and Yakutsk are from each other.

It’s a great pleasure to talk to Africans because they are open, just like children. They are not self-important and overly reserved, like Europeans. If they feel that you are trying to deceive them, or dislike them, they will not want to have anything to do with you. But if they see that you approach them with an open heart, they will do everything for you, they will give you their last shirt. Don’t

exploit them and treat them as a resource, like the Europeans do. We approach them as equals.

– Galli Germanovna, what does Africa mean for you now, and what place does it have in your life?

– Africa now has a very important place in my life. And I am very happy about this. We have chosen the path of education. We are the first people to give popular science talks highlighting the achievements of Russian scientists. This is the most effective way to reach Africans' hearts. By giving them, something they can see and touch. That means engineering and technology. That is how we are encouraging them to turn towards Russia.

We can see that the French are very active there. Turkey is opening a large number of schools and universities. And the Chinese are building universities. We cannot get left behind.

Of course, it is difficult to be first. But our presentations go down like a bomb, and I mean that in a good way. The Russian cosmonaut was extremely popular. And I hope that next year we will get a presidential grant and involve more cosmonauts in our project.

Now, we are tilling the soil, so to speak. And next we will be able to move on to cultural and business projects.

Interviewed by Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist and correspondent for "New Eastern Outlook"

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Vladyka Konstantin: “For me, Africa is the place of my ministry, my native continent”



My conversation with the Acting Patriarchal Exarch of Africa, Bishop Constantine (Ostrovsky) of Zارايسк, took place shortly after the decision of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria to remove him from archpastoral ministry. But we talked mainly about other things: about how the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in Africa live and what problems the clergy face on the ground; the humanitarian charitable projects jointly organized with Maria Lvova-Belova, the Children’s Rights Commissioner under the President of the Russian Federation; the Country for Children Foundation, and about how often Vladyka Konstantin plans to visit Africa.

– Vladyka Konstantin, the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa began the coming year with the largest-scale trip of clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church to various countries on the African continent. What were the goals of the participants in this historic trip?

– The goal was actually quite simple – to perform services on the great church holiday of the Nativity of Christ (Christmas). First and foremost for our compatriots, but also for all those who wished to attend. Naturally, the very fact of a priest coming to another country arouses interest. Therefore, our priests not only offered services and Church sacraments for people: Confession, Holy Communion and Baptism, they also held meetings and conversations. However, the main goal, I repeat, was to perform the Divine Services.

– Seventeen nations were visited during this trip. Summarizing the results, what problems do ministers face on the ground? Are they different from country to country or are they the same?

– Priests who serve in the field face a variety of problems. First of all, we need to understand that they left the Patriarchate of Alexandria and came to us. Therefore, it is absolutely understandable that the Patriarchate of Alexandria is taking certain measures against them. But I would like to emphasize one very essential point, which is our main principle. We do not quarrel and we do not make loud statements. Our task is to solve all problems peacefully and to calmly organize the church life of newly arrived priests. And we do it methodically, routinely, without unnecessary noise. The most important thing is to keep a peaceful spirit.

Priests are living people who have families and parishioners. Therefore, like any other person, they also have certain problems. If we talk about general problems... There are certain issues of organizing the life of the Russian Orthodox Church in Africa. This is a slightly different range of topics in itself. But the most serious and urgent thing is to build the right order in everything.

Since the beginning of this year I have already visited Egypt and South Africa; I am now off to Tanzania, then there will be other trips. All of them are filled with roughly the same activities: Meetings, communication, listening to people and their aspirations, understanding how exactly they live and what they need. And finding ways to solve their problems.

– I cannot help but touch upon the decision of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria to suspend you from archpastoral ministry. In general, how much opposition do you feel from the Patriarchate of Alexandria? And to what extent can it interfere with the activities of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa as a whole?

– Strictly speaking, the decision of the Patriarchate of Alexandria has nothing to do with me, since I am a cleric of the Russian Orthodox Church. From the ecclesiastical and legal point of view, I am subordinate to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, since I am a bishop and his vicar, that is, an assistant to the Patriarch. And as any Russian bishop, I am subordinate to the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, the Patriarchate of Alexandria can make absolutely any decisions – that is its own affair. As for opposition on their part... Life will show. For now, we are quietly carrying out our activities.

– *What is the situation with feeding our Russian-speaking brothers and sisters living in different African countries and local residents? Is there a need to increase the number of clergy and build new Churches and spiritual centers?*

– There are already Russian churches in Africa. Some of them have been around for a very long time. For example, in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa, Russian Orthodox priests serve there.

As for your question... This is life. Now I am visiting countries to get acquainted with the situation on the ground. Every temple should be built for a reason. There must be a community there, at least a small one. As a last resort – the desire of our local Russian citizens. Plus, there are certain external conditions – I mean indoors. Of course, in each case the issue will be resolved based on the actual situation being faced.

– *Today, parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church are founded in more than thirty countries. How often do requests come from other regions of these countries or new countries asking for clergy to be sent to them?*

– First of all, we work with the local clergy. After all, the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa is, first of all, local priests who came to the Russian Orthodox Church. Therefore, communication with these priests comes first. Then we work with those priests who want to move to the Russian Orthodox Church. Next is communication with people who want to be ordained in the Russian Orthodox Church and study in our seminaries. We pay a lot of attention to this process.

Presently, more than forty seminarians are studying in four seminaries in Russia. There are candidates for ordination among them – people who are preparing to receive the holy orders of the Diaconate and Priesthood.

As for the issue of sending Russian priests to serve in Africa, I think you understand perfectly well that this is connected with serious organizational issues. A priest must go to a specific place and for a specific service. Such issues require very serious consideration and study.

– I know that the Patriarchal Exarchate, together with the Commissioner for Children’s Rights under the President of the Russian Federation Maria Lvova-Belova and the Country for Children Foundation, is implementing humanitarian charity projects in Africa. What are these projects and how were they born?

– Not only priests live in Africa, ordinary believers are there. We perfectly see the situation that is developing and we hear the people’s requests. During the St. Petersburg Russia-Africa summit, a trilateral agreement on interaction was signed between the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa, the Commissioner for Children’s Rights under the President of the Russian Federation and the Country for Children charity foundation.

The Country for Children charity foundation allocated more than 2 million rubles to create a farm for growing crops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The money was used to rent 20 hectares of land, for plowing and harrowing the field, seeds and fertilizers, and wages for the workers. According to forecasts, the harvest should be good. About 500 families with children living below the poverty line will be able to receive it.

And in the village of Matara in Kenya, they built a poultry house for 500 chickens and purchased incubators. Charitable assistance for these purposes was also provided by the Country for Children foundation and amounted to 900,000 rubles.

Today, malnutrition is one of the reasons for the high mortality rate of African children. Therefore, the first priority is to help solve the food problem.

– Vladyka Konstantin, how often do you plan to visit African countries in the future?

– This is my ministry and I need to do it constantly. Therefore, I plan to travel regularly and often. In a few days I am going on my third trip this year. We will continue to make trips with large groups of Russian Orthodox priests. We hope that we will be able to organize a similar trip for Pascha (Easter). This is a

serious and responsible matter that requires a lot of preparation. I hope that with God's help we will be able to achieve this.

– And at the end of the conversation, a traditional question from our magazine. What is it like, your Africa? What attracts you most about it? What sticks in your soul?

– I have been abroad a lot and I can say with confidence that Africa is the same land as anywhere else in the world. The same people live there as in other countries. The same Orthodox priests serve there and the same Orthodox parishioners come to the churches. They are no different. Therefore, for me, Africa is the place of my ministry, my native continent.

– Vladyka Konstantin, we wish you God's help in your labors.

Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of the "New Eastern Outlook"

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Sulejanta Ndhyay: “Russophilia is not only love for Russia, it is love for all cultures of the world, it is love for humanity”



From the first minutes of our conversation, the vice-president of the International Russophile Movement, Sulejanta Ndhyay, impressed me with his impeccable Russian language and knowledge of Russian literature.

We talked about what Russophilism is in the modern world and how serious are the fears that the West might launch a broad campaign to discredit the supporters of this movement, seeing in it the notorious intrigues of Moscow. And, naturally, Mr Sulejanta shared the immediate plans of the International Russophile Movement.

– Mr Sulejanta, I know that you studied at Voronezh University, and I was born in the Voronezh region. Therefore, I wanted to ask you, what do you remember most vividly from your student years?

– I can never forget the incredible atmosphere in which we studied. I studied not only with Soviet students and students from the GDR (German Democratic Republic). We had interns from Italy and Portugal, guys from Africa, Asia and Latin America. So, I will never forget the amazing atmosphere of international friendship. It stayed with me forever.

My supervisor, with whom I studied Russian philology and folklore, has stayed in my heart forever. He opened for me the doors to the Russian literature of the 19th century. The topic of my research paper was as follows: “Literature and real reality on the example of 19th century Russia”. Within the framework of its preparation I learnt the works of great Russian writers and critics Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, Belinsky, Pisarev and others. And this knowledge is still with me.

– You are now vice-president of the International Russophile Movement. How did you come to the decision to join this society? In your opinion, what is Russophilia in the modern world?

– Russophilia in the modern world, as I said, is the Russian word, Russian literature, Russian civilization. This is everything that Russia has given to the world. Your country gave the world Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Pushkin... Although we always tell Russians that Pushkin is not only yours, he is also ours, African, because his great-grandfather Abram Hannibal came from our continent.

Thus, we can safely say that Russophilia is not only love for Russia, it is love for all cultures of the world, it is love for humanity. After all, Russia today is doing an incredible amount to ensure that what is now called multipolarity wins on the whole planet. And we, those who love Russian literature and history,

have gladly become Russophiles. It is absolutely not necessary to speak Russian for that. There are people among us who do not speak your language and have never even been to Russia. But they love Russia because they have discovered Russian culture. Some did it in their school years, others in their university years, and some already in adulthood.

– Can we say that the Russophile movement in Africa is gradually growing? What impact did the “Russia-Africa” Summit in St. Petersburg have on this process, where you moderated the panel discussion “Development of the Russophile Movement in Africa”?

– Immediately after the St Petersburg forum, we noticed that Russophilia began to develop. After returning to Senegal, we organized several conferences. At them, we spoke in detail about the results of the summit and our impressions of it, and distributed the final documents in social networks.

Many Africans, including officials, show interest in our international movement of Russophiles. Now we finish preparation for the next congress which will take place on 27 February. We plan that about 50 delegates from African countries will take part in it. Active preparatory work is now underway, including technical and logistical work.

Our movement is more cultural than political. It unites in its ranks all people interested in the triumph of peace in the world.

– One of the main goals of your movement is to promote co-operation, interaction and friendship. Which organizations and movements do you plan to work with or are already working closely with?

– I am the head of the African Renaissance Forum. And I am happy to state the fact that this movement has had excellent contacts with the International Russophile Movement since last year. Many organizations in Russia, in Germany, in France and other countries also want to cooperate with Russophiles. Nikolay Malinov, President of the International Russophile Movement, has organized a number of events in Bulgaria, as the people of this country show extreme interest.

We have plans to organize various events and conferences not only in Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America. We will popularize, expand and strengthen our movement.

– At the founding congress of the International Russophile Movement, fears were expressed that the West might unleash a broad campaign to discredit the supporters of the Russophile movement and see in everything the notorious machinations of Moscow. Are the predictions coming true?

– I can say with all confidence: we are afraid of nothing and no one, because our cause is right, good and noble. I will remind that the constituent congress of movement Russophiles has passed in March, 2023 and has collected more than hundred representatives from more than forty states of the world.

Certainly, our ideological enemies, enemies of the world will stop at nothing to oppose our development. But that does not frighten us. They will not succeed.

– To date, the Movement has opened representative offices in almost forty countries, implemented more than 20 international projects, and signed agreements with various organizations and agencies. What are your plans?

– After the conclusion of the regular second congress, there will be a huge number of events in different countries, including conferences in Africa. Not long ago I was in Addis Ababa, where I took part in the opening of the Ethiopian section of the Russophile movement. I was amazed at the number of people who studied in the Soviet Union or Russia and now occupy important positions in various fields and spheres of activity. And this is true of most African countries. Therefore, I can safely say that our prospects are practically limitless.

– You have a lot of ties with Russia. What is your Russia like? What do you love most here?

– You know, I always say that Russia is in some ways my destiny. When I graduated from lyceum in my homeland as a young man, I never even thought of coming to study in the Soviet Union. I won a competition and was supposed to go to a military academy in France or Canada. But a few days before my departure, I was given a scholarship to study in the USSR, because I had

chosen Russian as my second foreign language in lyceum. And I preferred the Soviet Union to France and Canada.

Russia gave me a lot. I would like to bow to the memory of Academician Vitaly Grigorievich Kostomarov, under whose guidance I wrote my PhD thesis on pedagogy at the Pushkin Institute of Russian Language in Moscow.

I became a diplomat, opening the Senegalese Embassy in Moscow. Then I worked as the first counsellor at UNESCO in Paris. All the natives of the former Soviet Union were my friends there. And it's all thanks to the Russian language. I travelled almost all over the world thanks to the Russian language. So, I think my destiny is closely linked to Russia.

– Mr Sulejanta, thank you for such a warm and extremely timely heartfelt conversation. Our magazine wishes prosperity to the International Russophile Movement. And I hope that you will tell our readers more than once about new interesting projects of Russophiles.

Yuliya NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of the “New Eastern Outlook”

Author: **Yuliya Novitskaya**

Louis Gouend: “I am very close to the mentality of the Russian people”



Louis Gouend heads the Cameroonian diaspora in Russia and is the founder of the African Business Club in our country. Why are business and investment in Africa becoming more and more attractive for Russian companies? Why is there an acute lack of information about each other in Russia and African countries? How do Cameroonians live in Russia?

Read the answers to these and many other questions in Louis Gouend's exclusive interview with the “New Eastern Outlook”.

– Dear Mr Louis, you are the founder of the African Business Club in Russia and a specialist in business communications between Russia and Africa. How do you assess the level of economic co-operation between Cameroon and Russia today?

– Thank you for your interest in Africa, which is my home, which I love and which I care about. In my opinion, relations between our countries are now in good shape. Russia has a great interest in Africa. Economic relations go hand in hand with political relations, as well as social and cultural exchanges. Already after the launch of the SWO, an agreement was signed on Cameroon’s military co-operation with Russia for five years. In all UN votes, Cameroon maintains neutrality. Our President Paul Biya, who shortly before celebrated his 90th birthday, took part in the Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg. This act clearly shows how much our country is interested in co-operation with Russia. A match between the Russian and Cameroon national football teams took place in Moscow on 12 October. Experts say that this was the Russians’ strongest rivalry since the introduction of sports sanctions. Not so long ago, a group of Cameroonian businessmen came to Moscow. They took part in various events, including a visit to the Made in Russia exhibition on Manezh Square. And on the territory of the Cameroon Embassy they held an exhibition “Made in Cameroon”, where they presented products manufactured in our country. I can say that almost every month there are some meetings and events aimed at strengthening economic relations between our countries. I am also approached by many students who want to find partners to realize their ideas and ready-made projects here in Russia.

– *Why are business and investment in Africa becoming more and more interesting for Russian companies?*

– You have to take into account that recently relations between Russia and many Western countries have become, to put it mildly, not very friendly. And business has to work and develop, and capital has to be invested somewhere. Therefore, it is not surprising that Russian investors have started to pay more attention to the African and Asian markets. The African continent is by far the most undervalued in terms of investment. Its development potential is enormous, as is the return on investment. Russian investors are right to look towards Africa. It is the future!

– *Russia has changed the concept of its foreign policy – from 2019, it is implementing a policy of co-operation with Africa as a single entity. Can you already see any advantages?*

– Russia has a huge experience of co-operation with Western countries, with China, with India, and will probably continue to do so. But it is necessary to look towards Africa. I do not think that Russia sees Africa as a whole. After all, there are 54 countries on our continent. Not only that, but they are divided into regions: North Africa, East, West, Central and South. And in each of them there are different countries, each with its own history, laws, potential and opportunities. And each has its own relations with Russia. Therefore, the approach to each country must be individualized.

– You are the organizer of the conference “Fundamentals of International Trade with Africa: Imports and Exports in a New Environment”. In a nutshell, what are the differences between trade today and 20 years ago?

– The main difference I would call parallel imports. Today, all the previously clearly worked out trade and logistics routes and financial schemes have broken down. That is why we have started holding various conferences where we are trying to solve these two main issues – finance and logistics. In the past, these markets were mainly occupied by Western companies, which have now left. So we are busy looking for new optimal ways to deliver goods and financial payment schemes. I hope that things will get better soon.

– In the summer, you took part in the Russia-Africa Forum in St Petersburg. Almost six months have passed, emotions have subsided, detailed analyses and conclusions have been drawn. In your opinion, what is the most important outcome of this forum?

– The realization that we need each other and must work together in the same direction. Agreements were concluded at the forum in various spheres: political, economic, scientific and technical, humanitarian, educational, military-technical, cultural. And now the work continues. If we draw a parallel with the Sochi Forum 2019, I can say that after its completion, there was no such excitement as there is now. There was silence, almost nothing happened. Now the work is in full swing. There are more and more events on Africa every day. And the impact will be spectacular.

– You are the President of the Cameroon Diaspora in Russia. I know that at the beginning of October there was a regular meeting of representatives of Cameroonian associations in Russian cities. How do Cameroonians live in Russia?

– Good (smiles). I don't see any particular problems. Some people have run out of visa, but they don't want to leave. Some have difficulties learning the language. And you understand very well how much harder it is to live in a country when you don't know the language well – even the simplest questions cause difficulties. There is one problem, though. And it concerns all Africans, not only Cameroonians. I mean difficulties with legal employment. Guys have to either be engaged in entrepreneurial activity or work, for example, as a delivery boy or taxi driver. But at the same time, they like it here and do not want to leave.

– You are often called “ambassadors of friendship”, including for representatives of many governments and international cooperation organizations. How would you define your mission on Earth?

– I am just a very sociable and active person, and when I go to various events, I easily meet people. Many people see me as a reliable partner and trust me to solve complex problems in various spheres of co-operation. I see my mission at this moment in time as doing everything in my power to strengthen comprehensive relations between Russia and Africa. I have been living here for 30 years, and I think that people like me, who understand the specifics of life in your country and have strong roots in my homeland, can give some guidance to their compatriots who want to start their business here. At the same time, we can give the right advice to Russians who are looking towards Africa. After all, Russia and Africa are two completely different worlds, with different mentalities. Now that strengthening relations between Russia and Africa is becoming a priority for our countries, I see my mission as helping everyone on both sides. To help people not to lose money, time, or, even worse, the desire to move in this direction.

– At a recent meeting of the Russian-African Club at Moscow State University, you drew attention to the acute lack of information about each other in Russia and African countries. I fully agree with you and can say for my part that the New Eastern Outlook is trying its best to fill this gap.

But there is still a lack of information. What do you think this has to do with?

– In my opinion, this is due to the fact that there has not been much interest in Africa in recent years. It was only remembered when there were some natural disasters, famines or coups. Therefore, Russians have not had the opportunity to fully understand and recognize our continent. This is, indeed, a big problem. That is why now many investors are afraid to go to Africa – it is scary there, malaria, there are diseases... Although in fact it is calm there. For example, the Chinese invest a lot in Africa. If they need to build a factory, they don't even hire local workers. They bring equipment, materials, and people by ship. I'm not talking about the Europeans, who have settled here since the 15th century. And the Russians have nothing to fear. And this requires truthful information. In this regard, it is good that publications like yours are appearing, covering African issues, allowing people to get to know and love our continent, and publishing truthful information.

– ***We would love to collaborate and debunk existing myths with your help.***

– That's great! And also... Maybe you've heard about the resource created at the Russian-African Club of MSU, designed to unite journalists and bloggers from Russia and Africa <https://rusafroclub.ru/>

– ***Not only heard, but registered already.***

– They post their materials on politics, economics, culture, education, science and technology, and sports. After all, not only in Russia there is little information about Africa, but also in Africa there is a lack of information about your country. And this resource is designed to make up for it.

– ***You have lived in Russia for over 30 years, and you have probably been to many places. What is your favorite place in Russia and why? And in general, what is your Russia like – what is it that sticks in your mind most of all?***

– Indeed, I do travel a lot around Russia. But I like Moscow most of all (smiles). I like the crazy energy of this big city. I am a man of business, and there are huge opportunities here. I believe that if a person lives in Moscow and can't find a business, then it's not his city. Moscow is not easy. But at the same time, where it is difficult, there are many opportunities for development.

But I like to have a holiday in Sochi. I really like the off-season, especially autumn. The sea, calmness, you can still swim. In Moscow, however, I have two favorite places: Red Square and the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. They fill me with energy. If I have free time, I just go and walk there.

And what is the one thing that has stuck with me most of all here? The people. I am very close to the mentality of the Russian people. I like the fact that people here are open, not as hypocritical as in the West. There, they smile at you in the eyes, but they are ready to put a knife in your back. Here you can see at once who the enemy is. The Russian people do not have the sense of exclusivity inherent in Western people. This is because, in my opinion, Russia is a multinational country. Its energy favours people of different nationalities living in peace and friendship.

– Dear Mr Louis, thank you for a thorough and frank conversation. I hope to continue the conversation, as we have not had time to touch on many issues.

Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, correspondent of the "New Eastern Outlook"

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Zenebe Kinfu: “I am always discovering something new in Russia, that’s why I have lived here for so long”



The conversation with Mr Zenebe Kinfu Tafesse, President of the Union of African Diasporas, was direct, frank and in some places sharp. We discussed how Russian journalists should write about Africa and African journalists about Russia. We talked about the problems of employing Africans in our country. And, using concrete examples, we tried to work out how to learn Russian in Africa.

– Mr Zenebe, in one of your interviews in the summer, you said that your African journalists publish about 18 stories about Russia every month in English-speaking African countries. But not many in other languages because there are almost no journalists in French- and Spanish-speaking countries. Is the situation changing now? I know that, for example, the Russian-African Media Platform was launched at the end of November.

By the way, our online edition is published in Russian, English and French. We would be delighted to co-operate.

– Unfortunately, nothing in the media space has changed recently. On 11 December, the results of the International Award for Foreign Journalists “Honest Look” were summed up in Moscow. For the first time, journalists from Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso took part in the competition. In total, journalists from 10 countries of the African continent sent their works. It is gratifying that journalist Kester Klomegah from Ghana received one of the main prizes. And, by the way, according to the jury’s calculations, we had more materials – 25.

As the head of the Union of African Diasporas, I can say that while the situation with English-speaking journalists is more or less normal, we still lack French-speaking journalists. That is why we are still looking for them. But we are looking for professional journalists, not bloggers. You must agree that these are different things. A blogger writes alone, so the opinion he expresses on his pages cannot be considered objective. And a blogger does not have the main journalistic genres.

– Russian journalists write a lot for Africans about events taking place in our country...

– Yes, but this cannot be considered completely objective information. African journalists must write for the inhabitants of their countries about events taking place in Russia. And vice versa. It should not be a report to tick a box, but true and reliable information. Journalists should make a detailed analysis of the available facts, objectively show the positive aspects, criticize both Russian and African reality, and predict the dynamics of development in various spheres. Then it will be useful. For now, it is too early to talk about any results. The first serious conclusions can be made in a year or two, not earlier.

If we talk about propaganda, in the good sense of the word, it is certainly necessary because it gives us an understanding of the real picture of things. Remember the pandemic – propaganda information about protective masks had a positive effect then.

Interstate work should be done by international journalists with clear ideas about ideology and political relations. A small example. If I write a story about the meeting of two presidents, I should pay more attention to the president of my country, otherwise, I will show my unprofessionalism. Among other things,

the content is very important here. Look, French TV channels have been broadcasting in African countries for forty or even fifty years, but this has not prevented military coups in some countries and their withdrawal from French rule.

– The work of Russian institutions to increase efforts to study the Russian language and our culture in Africa has been very slow. The results are still poorly visible. But the work is going on and, I am sure, it will certainly yield results. To what extent, in your opinion, is the Russian language in demand in Africa?

– Good question, I love answering it. Let's take a concrete example. Language is a tool, like a fork and a spoon, for eating. And the more professionally we use it, the more we benefit and enjoy the process. So, I don't think that spreading the Russian language as such does anything for Russia. As a person who speaks seven languages, I am sure that the need to learn a language should always be supported economically. Then this language will spread quickly.

Think back to the nineties. Not a single airport in Turkey, Egypt, or Arab countries had inscriptions and signs in Russian.

– But as soon as the flow of Russian tourists poured in, the picture changed dramatically.

– Absolutely right, especially in Turkey and Egypt. Everywhere there are signs in Russian, in all hotels there are Russian-speaking staff, and in shops, there are Russian-speaking shop assistants, excursions are accompanied by Russian-speaking guides, and in local hospitals there are Russian-speaking doctors.

Or let's take the Chinese language. Only seven years ago, it was impossible to hear a single Chinese word or see inscriptions in this language in Africa. Today, at any African airport, you will find signs in Chinese. Does this mean that we love China a lot? I am sure that there is simply an economic interest in China, as there has been a huge increase in tourist traffic from that country. By the way, the same thing is observed in Russia.

Therefore, in order for the Russian language to spread on the African continent, there must be an enduring interest in it, backed up economically. Serious

Russian companies should come there, and Africans will learn Russian to work in them and with them.

– I think we should not forget the hundreds of thousands of Africans educated in the Soviet Union or Russia who want their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be educated in Russian as well.

– Absolutely. And it is for them that we must first of all open the way. To this end, it is necessary to open branches of Russian universities in Africa to study the language.

It is necessary to expand cooperation in the scientific and medical spheres, as it was in Soviet times. We can give many more examples from various branches of production and spheres of life. But the conclusion will be the same everywhere: language dissemination is possible only if there is a need for it. If you just go around suggesting: to learn our language, it is unlikely that it will lead to the desired result.

To summarize the above... In my opinion, what is being done now in terms of teaching Russian to Africans (I mean sending Russian language teachers there) is not enough. We need to step up our efforts.

– During my conversation with Louis Gouend, head of the Cameroon Diaspora, he focused on the problem of African students finding employment after receiving their education here in Russia. Indeed, there are difficulties. And, unfortunately, they are not being solved as quickly as we would like. Perhaps it is time to bring this problem up for discussion, so to speak, at the intergovernmental level?

– If we talk about the employment of Russian university graduates in Africa, there are certain problems. They have to endure enormous competition with graduates of English- and French-speaking universities, which dominate the labour market. Today, graduates from Indian institutions are also joining them. There are also graduates from China, where about seven hundred thousand Africans are studying today.

If we are talking about Russia, then there is practically no work here for Africans who study in or have graduated from Russian universities. In 2015, a law was passed regulating the work of foreign students. But over time, certain contradictions have come to light. Here is an example. If the law allows foreign students to work, then they can work anywhere, including in the State Duma and the Federation Council. But foreign citizens cannot be allowed, for example, to enter closed territories and be involved in work with information that is a state secret. There are certain difficulties with the admission of foreign citizens to various events, closed territories and facilities. For example, in order to register for participation in a conference, foreign citizens need to provide passport data at least one week in advance. And what to say about work! So, foreigners have to take jobs not according to their education, but wherever they can get them, mostly unskilled jobs: handing out adverts near the metro, trading at the market or dealing in cryptocurrency, which is often connected with crime. This is the case with students.

But we also have another problem concerning national diasporas, which includes people like me. I am talking about those Africans who obtained Russian citizenship a long time ago. Most of us are also not employed, and we have to “sit on the backs” of our Russian wives. This is despite the fact that many of us have higher education from the best Russian universities. There are among us red-degree graduates, candidates and even doctors of science. Many organizations are not ready for various reasons, including mentality, to see Africans among their employees. And no one can force them to do so. Sometimes it seems to me that culture and mentality have not changed much since the days of Hannibal and Peter the Great.

For example, when I left PFUR at the end of 2020, I was looking for a job for a very long time. I was invited to give lectures, but I got a job with difficulty.

Unfortunately, many people can't stand it and go to the West in search of income. The result is that specialists who were trained in Africa and Russia end up working, for example, in Europe.

– So, we are giving away highly educated and trained personnel for free?

– Yes. At the same time, I can say that if managers of Russian companies operating on our continent hire African students who have graduated from Russian universities, they get excellent employees. I know of such examples in the mining industry and Yandex-taxi.

In this connection, I would like to raise the issue of inviting migrant workers from Africa. It seems to me that such a need is already overdue. Russia is beginning to feel the shortage of labor. I think we will see this more clearly in the near future. If such programmes start to work, it will be the strongest impetus for the study of Russian language and culture in Africa.

But despite all of the above, despite all of the existing difficulties, I sincerely hope for changes for the better.

– Mr Zenebe, you have lived in our country for a long time. What is it like, your Russia? What do you like most of all?

– I have been living here for almost 34 years. Russia is very large, it is difficult to judge it from any one angle. I have travelled around half of its territories. For me, Russia is interesting for its culture, classical literature, classical art, classical ballet, and classical music. Russia is integrated between East and West, and that is its uniqueness. A huge number of nationalities and ethnicities live here.

What do we have in common with you? I am Ethiopian and Orthodox. Different religions coexist in Russia. Russians can only fight if their homeland is attacked by an enemy, then they unite.

I hate it when the history of different countries is compared to each other. Everyone's history is individual and unique. In the same way, people are created differently from each other – everyone has different height, appearance, character, and health. I am an opponent of globalization. It seems to me that Russia should not look at anyone else, it should go its own way. This is how I see my Russia. I am always discovering something new in it. That is why I have lived here for so long.

– Mr Zenebe, thank you for your honest and sincere conversation. We look forward to meeting you again.

Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist-interviewer, and correspondent of "New Eastern Outlook"

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Oksana Mayorova: “We differ only in skin color and brightness of clothing”



What do Russian and African women have in common? Can we make the world a better place so that our children have a better life than we did? We discussed all of this and more with Oksana Mayorova, the African Women’s Union’s Director of International Development.

– Ms Mayorova, you work for the Africa Women’s Union as the Director of International Development. Women are a tremendous force...

– Indeed, they have a great deal of influence in Africa, and in that regard, we are comparable to them.

– How promising are collaborative initiatives involving women’s organizations in Russia and the African continent (or specific African nations)? I am aware that you work to safeguard children’s rights, provide

for their wellbeing, and create an atmosphere that supports their growth...

– The Africa Women’s Union is a distinctive group that brings together women from 27 nations. What makes it special? It is not an organization that was established from above or brought in from the outside. It’s a union that practically grew from the ground. It is composed of women who have started to come together and who recognize their own strengths and weaknesses. They are aware of their problems and have started banding together inside nations to collaborate on improving issues.

Their motto is women for women. The source of a woman’s anguish is always her children. They therefore started to prioritize giving girls the chance to pursue their education. Why the girls? First, because the Union is female. They are also significantly lower socially than boys.

This year, we have set ourselves a goal to raise funds and provide 100 girls with government scholarships for their education in Russia. It is clear that Russia has allotted these quotas. But first and foremost, a girl must be able to fly in order to travel and reside in Russia for five years. There are instances where multiple villages gather funds and take out loans solely to purchase her a ticket. They also need food and winter clothing. After all, finding a job as a student can be exceedingly challenging and perhaps illegal. On the scope of Africa, 100 people is undoubtedly a small amount. But that’s only the first step. Should 100 females receive a higher education in agriculture. It also needs to be acknowledged that all African girls want to get this kind of education.

– I’ve heard that Russian agriculture is considered to be the best in Africa. As a result, is our agricultural education also the best?

– That’s correct, that’s what the Africans told me. So, this girl comes back to her homeland as a first-class agricultural expert. She has the highest social rank, she can earn her own money, and she is not reliant on gender preconceptions and bias, which do exist. This girl creates a chain reaction: she assists another girl, then another... when a result, when women’s social standing rises, so does their influence. The women who have begun self-organizing into such alliances and assisting the girls are largely those who once received outside assistance to learn and advance in life and career. It’s an invaluable experience.

African women are thrilled about Russia; they adore it, they are familiar with it, and they are willing to send their daughters to study there. You have no idea how much joy and optimism it brings them. I am delighted that Russia has taken this move toward Africa. Africans, in turn, are very happy to meet Russians.

– In these difficult times, family, moral, and spiritual values must be preserved and strengthened...

– Russia is one of their most important international defenders. In this regard, the African continent is close to Russia. It is very comforting to work with countries where we have a similar religion. For instance, Ethiopia. Working with Muslim countries is simple because we share a desire to protect family and moral values, and traditions. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman, a boy is a boy, and a girl is a girl, and there can be no other way.

Things are different in countries that are heavily influenced by the West. Many citizens of these countries with whom I have spoken claim that various homosexual and LGBT societies have been intentionally formed and legislated. Ordinary citizens, however, are completely alien to it. They relate stories of African children being adopted and changing their gender in the adoptive nation. Ordinary people find this shocking. But the United States and its Western allies are putting tremendous pressure on these nations' governments.

The difference between the people who live on the ground, so to speak, and the governing strata is enormous. In addition to the populace, we also need to collaborate with the government. Additionally, there won't be any fruitful collaboration when the authorities hold such a viewpoint.

For ordinary Africans, Vladimir Putin is a real hero because he is the only one who was not afraid to say openly that America is wrong, not afraid to confront it.

Africans are in favor of any gender equality initiatives in Russia that consider the roles that men and women play in society, as well as the customs of the family. Ethiopia hosted a symposium on the preservation of traditional family values only the other day. Priests of the Russian Orthodox Church were among those welcomed there. Along with exchanging ideas, the attendees decided how to work together to resist the so-called Western values.

– What other initiatives does your women's organization have underway?

– This Union was first established in Africa for Africa. Projects have been started in the majority of nations to support girls who desire to attend school. Having a New Year party is a great experience. However, once the holiday is over, what will come next?

After all, a girl needs to ride the bus and pack meals every day in order to get to school. In Africa, a lot of kids just attend school in order to receive food.

Girls face a lot of family pressure in many nations to stay at home and help with household chores and picking maize instead of attending school. A major advantage in our situation is that the women themselves are residents of this village, so they can identify the issue and take action. They are well aware of who really needs help. And they provide the care that the child needs at that moment.

– *What is the cost of eating and riding the bus to school?*

– You know, it's not that much. In certain places, three or four families band together to buy a bottle of milk and a slice of bread for a daughter's school lunch. And this has to be done every day for years. It turns out that women make quite serious commitments. And that is worthy of much respect.

We work in collaboration with the International Foundation "Children Must Live". It has various shelters all around Russia. And now it is expanding and creating an African orphanage network. The Foundation equips computer laboratories for children from African slums at its own expense. It's not a place for toys in this scenario. It's a place where youngsters can learn how a keyboard and a computer work, as well as the opportunities that networking technologies give. And this is already a concrete step that will assist the child climb the social ladder in the future. Otherwise, he has no options other than the street, drugs, and a short life.

– *Ms Mayorova, how did you end up working for this organization?*

– Also, you could say, from the ground upwards. As co-founder of the Pan-African PPP Development Center, I spend a lot of time throughout Africa interacting with local communities. After all, all public-private partnerships are dependent on local communities. The land is totally theirs. People from these

communities will also be employed in the businesses. Social projects that are always linked to large construction or industrial projects – hospitals, schools – always try to preserve good relations with the local population. Therefore, I know and work with a large number of individuals, and a large number of people know me.

Of course, issues that matter to women came up in the process of communication. Women began to unite. We have a media channel in this Union where people may interact, discuss, and exchange ideas. They talk about everything from the color of the neighbor girl's clothes to the global issues, like who will become the world hegemon in the end. When I look at them, I realize that we differ only in skin color and brightness of clothing. Children, husbands, neighbors, nations, governments, food, clothing, education, and the never-ending question of how to improve the world so that our children might live at least a little bit easier than we do are the same issues that worry us.

Interviewed by Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist and correspondent for "New Eastern Outlook"

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Yanina Dubeikovskaya: “Africa is a completely different world, it exists on a different plane”



When accompanying your husband on a work trip to Africa, how do you not only manage to stay married, but also start your own charity and business? How can you avoid walking on and ignoring another person’s suffering? How can you be generous and share your energy with those around you? How can you find ways to continue to do good?

We talk about this and more with Yanina Dubeikovskaya, who has a PhD in Philosophy, and is the organizer of the Kalingalinga Girls charity project and founder of the Free Africa business platform.

– Yanina, as destiny had it, you found yourself in Zambia and ended up living there for four years, visiting 11 African countries. What does Africa mean for you now? How do you see it?

– I would say that Africa is a world that is perpendicular to ours. And I really mean perpendicular, not just parallel. When you begin to live on this continent, it is as if you discover a new dimension, both in the outside world and within yourself. I think tourists also feel this, though not as strongly.

Africa has transformed my experience of life – the way I relate to the world, my relationships with others, my opportunities to change the environments around me and people’s destinies. It is a completely different world. A completely different balance between humankind and nature, society and the natural world. And then there are the huge cultural differences between the people living on that continent. And, as long as you have an open mind, it’s an experience I think everyone should have.

– I have been following your Kalingalinga Girls volunteer project for a long time. What was it that motivated you to set up the project? And what does it mean for you?

– The project is extremely dear to me. That is why, even now that my husband’s placement in this country has ended, I intend to stay involved with the project and will come back several times a year.

I had the idea for the project during my second year in Zambia. After about six months, I suddenly realized that most of the people I was talking to were going hungry. It is very hard for us to understand that there are people on this planet, including children, who have got used to the feeling of hunger. They communicate with others, they carry on working, and just live with this sensation.

The project just started itself, really. Every person who thinks about charity work needs to answer this question – both for other people and, most importantly, for themselves: do you have enough energy, and enough money, to be able to give of yourself to others. Because generally, it’s not an easy thing to do.

– But more often than not, philanthropy doesn’t come from people who have more than they need...

– That’s true. You realize that you can do some meaningful, substantial things that change the quality of people’s lives. In our case, the ability to change the course of a child’s life. The child begins to relate to others differently, to smile,

to think, to explore beyond the confines of the fairly basic culture that they grew up in.

I have been shown photos of girls who were found in Kalingalinga, a poor district of Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. It's a kind of ghetto, which used to be the home of the servants who worked for the British population during the colonial period. The colonial regime is now a thing of the past, but these districts are still there. They are still poor, and the residents have a low standard of living. So, there is a great opportunity for helping people here.

I met football trainers who coach the local boys. And now they are also working with the girls as well. Back then, my son was 16 and my daughter was 13. And I decided to go take them with me, and go to these children on Sundays and talk to them, teach them and try and expand their worldview and outlook. These children didn't have any televisions, computers, smartphones or Internet access. They lead a fairly simple lifestyle, and it's incredibly hard for them to break out of that vicious cycle. And this is not just only because there is no money, although that is a very important factor, but also because the girls don't have any role models who can show them that it is possible to learn, to get a profession, to travel... These are the children we took care of and... who we got involved with.

The girls are very lively and positive, and they radiate energy and joy. And it's hard to reconcile that with the idea of a starving child. You can see how excited they are about the very least thing that you can do for them. These Sunday lessons became a great event for them! Then we started to expand our activities, rented premises, and brought in more girls, and now there are 100 of them. We started to raise money so we could teach girls whose families cannot send them to school.

– I know that this August you organized your first volunteers' camp.

– Yes, we found sponsors who are ready to fund the teaching of our girls. Now we have 55 of them.

We also have mothers' groups. They sew clothes that we can then sell, either online or here in Russia. For many of them, this is a unique opportunity to earn money through their own work.

I am very happy that I didn't just walk on regardless. Zambia is a religious country, and people have high moral standards. There are many very kind,

caring people who really want to help others. In some ways, I did this for my children. And the results were way beyond my expectations. My children began to experience real pain in the face of another person's hunger.

I am confident that anyone who wants to raise their children to be truly human should come to our camp or support our project in some other way.

– You are the founder of the Open Africa business platform, which has been running for just over a year. What was your goal in creating this platform? What has it achieved in this relatively short time? And what are the plans for its future?

– This business platform is a logical extension of the Kalingalinga Girls project. In Zambian families, it is normal to focus on boys' education. Girls are often sent to school for just one year, so they can do the exam and complete the minimum possible middle education. It is considered quite enough if they can count to a hundred, write and read a little.

In order to feed all the girls in the project to eat and teach them and help them develop, we need money. We are very grateful to all our donors. But, unfortunately, we do not have regular donors. And we plan to give the girls the opportunity to have a profession, for example, to work as nurses. We need to think ahead.

Raising money for this purpose was my main goal in setting up Open Africa. The platform provides Russian with services to help them enter the African market, including consultancy services, helping them find partners and market research. Together with Business Russia, we organized the Open Africa Forum.

I am convinced that Africa is the continent of the future. And not just because of its growing population and economic growth, but in terms of the opportunities it offers for medium-sized businesses. In Africa, big businesses are closely linked to politics and governments. But for a medium-sized business, which can set up production there and bring its own technologies, for example an IT or construction business, there are a huge number of opportunities.

The idea is very simple – to get businesses involved, and help them, while linking this service to our work as a charitable organization. For us, the first swallow of our spring was a company that makes fruit freezing equipment, which is now building a plant in Zambia.

– Many wives go with their husbands on long work placements. But they certainly don't all use their time like you have done. You have a unique gift for transmitting your energy to everyone around you. Even your children help you with the Kalingalinga Girls project. Where do you get your strength from?

– Thank you for your kind words and for your appreciation! I believe that it is my mission to give to others. A lot of energy flows through me. I am also convinced that when you give a lot, you receive a lot back. All my life, I have practiced Chinese energy-based gymnastics. And also, I am surrounded by a lot of happiness, a lot of good, a lot of positivity. You just need to let that positivity into you.

Unfortunately, people are often not prepared, psychologically or mentally, to let this energy in. For many, it's a kind of balance sheet – they want to take more and give less. But it really doesn't work like that. You take in the energy like a funnel. And then, when you are full of energy yourself, you can transform it, strengthen it, concentrate it and focus it. Sometimes I surprise myself. I suppose I just take in a lot of energy, and I know how to use it.

– “Seek out opportunities, and stay on the light side” is a phrase I read in one post on your social media page. It could easily be a personal motto. What phrase does Yanina Dubeikovskaya treat as a guiding principle?

– Not just that one. Also: Let evil stop with you. You should let everything in, and then transform it and allow only good to come out.

Now there is another thing I have come to understand very clearly. Through our actions and thoughts, we leave many traces behind us in this life. And these return, and impact not just ourselves, but also future generations. The more you take on, the happier you will be. The more difficulties and challenges you are able to transform into happiness and fulfilment, the better you will be able to fulfil your life goals. I get a lot of energy from my children, and also intellectual insights, even though I have a doctorate in philosophy.

I am also sure that, pious as this may sound, goodness is something that needs to be practiced. Not just talked about or preached, but actually practiced. Every day, you need to stay on the light side of life. And really, that something you can always do. Unfortunately, it is far from everyone who takes this opportunity. After all, goodness is essential not just for its recipients, the girls, but also for its givers. I believe that charity work is a way of transmitting goodness. At my

time of life, I find it very important to do something concrete every day – to teach, feed, help businesses, create resources or build sustainable business models...

– *What has Africa given you? What has it taught you?*

– It has taught me to be grounded, it has immersed me in absolute physical reality. In my case, the transformation has been a flow of energy down to the lowest level. The energy generated by hunger, of an uncertain life, of poverty, has taught me that you have to physically deal with this level of existence. And with your skills and abilities, you achieve a lot there. Africa is where you meet reality.

You say that few of those who travel to Africa get involved in projects like this. That's not surprising. People are really afraid of opening up, it is very hard to leave your comfort zone. It is much easier to cling to your stereotypes and hide from the fact that you are small and dependent on nature, and that there are people around you who want to eat, and people who can be taught to do something. I'm certainly not judging anyone. Each of us has our mission, our own path. Africa has taught me, without losing touch with my inspiration and ideals, to work at a completely material level and build sustainable change for people at this level.

– *What do you miss most, now that you have left Africa?*

– I really miss the girls, and my team. Of course, they send me videos. On Mondays, we give self-defense classes. One African jewelry pays for the education of twenty girls. We teach them fighting skills – sometimes their lives may depend on their ability to defend themselves. On Wednesdays, young mothers come in with their babies on their backs, and sew or play chess. On Fridays, the mothers of the girls who study with us come in. On Sundays, we have a Sunday school for a hundred girls. I know many of them very well, as I have watched them grow since the beginning of the project. They are very different from the girls who don't come to our classes – they can express themselves, they are confident, and they smile.

I also miss Victoria Falls. That is a place that brings me a huge amount of energy. I have been to Mount Kilimanjaro, and climbed up to the height of 6 000 meters. But still, the place that gives me most energy is Victoria Falls.

– Yanina, thank you for a very interesting and informative conversation. May your projects grow and flourish. You are doing very important work.

P.S. Any readers who want to support Kalingalinga Girls can contact our editor, and we will let you know how you can help.

Interviewed by Yulia NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist and correspondent for “New Eastern Outlook”

PART 2

Russia-Africa: a new political pole of the world

Author: **Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov**

Moving forward, without looking back



The Russia's President Inauguration constitutes another important starting point both for our country and for all humanity – at the contemporary era decisive stage. And maybe now more than ever – it's time to realize that there will be no going back. Just like the fact that the Western minority will no longer have any privileged position.

As expected, the official inauguration ceremony of Russian President Vladimir Putin took place according to plan, in the Kremlin. And if in the West, as well as among its puppets, notably the Kievian regime, this fact has caused hysterical gesticulations and inappropriate remarks, for the majority of humanity real enthusiasm is observed and great hopes are placed in new victories of the international multipolar order supporters.

At the end of March, the Lebanese pan-Arab television channel Al Mayadeen published an article with a very significant title: "Putin: A Champion of the Global South?" In the said article it was noted that Moscow's defiance of Western elements, particularly the economic sanctions and the military aid to the Ukrainian regime, has not only set an example for other nations to follow but also eroded the legitimacy of the West's ideological supremacy.

In the conclusion of this article, it was emphasized that, generally speaking, Vladimir Putin has done a remarkable job at defending his country's interests

and national security. Not only have his contributions solidified his leadership within Russia, but they have also inspired the Global South towards new horizons. With that in mind, history has begun to shift in the right direction.

In fact, all of this is true. With a small remark. Some analysts in the non-Western world and the global majority, both in Russia and in a number of other countries, view the current period as one of transition from a unipolar to a multipolar world. It is believed that this is not entirely correct. The multipolar world has already become a reality for several years, when the Westerners and their lackeys began actively to lose their positions in various parts of the world. And in particular where, in the relatively recent past, they considered themselves unconditional “masters”, notably on the African continent.

Today, what we are observing – is simply the other important step for the multipolar reality. More precisely – that of an active confrontation between those who organized and adhered to the multipolar world order – on the one hand, and on the other – this small group of revisionists, nostalgic for the unipolar era, who thought, and perhaps even were convinced, that they had sufficient strength and ability to return the overwhelming majority of humanity – under their dictate. Presumably – they greatly overestimated their said abilities.

Remembering one of my participations in a broadcast, in the first months following the start of the Special Military Operation, on a French radio – intended for an African audience. And to the question that was asked to me regarding the fact that dozens of countries had voted against Russia at the UN on the “Ukrainian” question, I proposed in return to calculate the demographic component of the states having voted in favor of the Western-Kievan resolution, and those who did not support it – either by voting against, or by abstaining. This part of the comment was deleted and there has been no further communication with this media since. However, it should be noted that among African journalists working for Western media – a significant number of them – sympathize with Russia, China and the multipolar world order as a whole, and not with their Western employers. Some end up leaving their positions; others prefer to keep their jobs while waiting for other opportunities and alternatives. In general, everyone acts according to his or her conscience, ethics and values.

The main thing is precisely that the Western minority – represented by the political and media pseudo-elites of the small Western space – is today more than ever aware of the fact that it constitutes precisely an obvious minority. As part of its arrogance, it nevertheless continues to try to frighten with new sanctions and other “consequences”. But as it is said – it doesn’t impress. And not only the greatest powers of the non-Western world, but also the states which, in the recent past, found themselves de facto under Western

occupation, but which have since been able to completely take control of the situation. This particularly applies to a number of African states, which are today dealing very painful blows to the West and their cheap puppets.

And today we should certainly remember the following. That perhaps and in the same way that these countries take example from ours in the context of their own confrontation with NATO-Western criminals, we too could learn a lot from them. When, for example, the youth and civil society of Burkina Faso, a country led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré – who so magnificently recalls the legendary leader of this same country – Thomas Sankara – demand the closure of the American embassy – and this, after Burkina Faso has already succeeded in driving out the troops of the French regime – it is certainly time for us to reflect on the fact that we should not look back and think that in the foreseeable future it will be possible to reason those who are simply not capable of changing and adapting to the realities of the contemporary world.

The time has come for movement only forward. Together – the majority of the non-Western world and humanity, who clearly understood that it is simply not worth forgiving liars, hypocrites and the worst criminals in the entire history of humanity. For them – the train is gone forever. With all the consequences that ensue. Final point.

Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov, entrepreneur and political observer, expert in issues relating to Africa and the Middle East

Author: **Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov**

The two main objectives of the Russian-African relationship are education and joint cooperation in raw material processing



Relations between Russia and the African nations are more important now than they have ever been. In the upcoming years, this direction is expected to gain even more significance. Although the development of truly cordial relations between Russia and Africa is still ongoing, how do you get to ensure that this interaction has a truly strong added value?

Russia's connections with Africa have long-standing and important foundations in a wide range of areas. Naturally, military and technological cooperation are among them. This field of activity is more relevant and efficient today than ever before. Indeed, nothing will be able to halt the natural process—not even barriers, threats, or pressure from Western regimes. The current and future triumphs of Russia's military alliance with a number of African countries will only serve to reinforce this trend.

What's the situation with the rest of the directions? The process, as they say, is clearly underway, as is the case with Russian-African relations in general. Although trade is still expanding, trade and economic ties with the continent are way below those with a number of other actors. However, there is a genuine

chance for additional growth if the appropriate tactics and paths are chosen. Elevating performance to a whole new level is the key objective.

Increased exports of Russian commodities and services, especially those from traditional sectors such as grain to fertilizers, are unquestionably important. Increased African exports to Russia should also be on the rise. Russia has enormous advantages in grain for a variety of reasons, and there are already clear impulses to increase Russian interests, which competitors regard without enthusiasm. France is now furious that Russia's grain share is increasing in areas where Paris has traditionally held a strong position, such as Morocco and Algeria.

On the other hand, and however much the representatives of French interests may not like it – it's basically pretty clear-cut. France is only the fourth largest grain exporter in the world, with a share of just under 10%, whereas Russia is clearly the dominant worldwide actor, accounting for at least one-fifth of the global market. And, in today's reality, when Russian suppliers can provide better terms, including lower prices, compared to French and other Western competitors, few countries will refuse, prioritizing their national interests, especially in a critical marketplace like the grain market.

However, what potential benefits may Russian interests have from being involved in African projects? And here it is worth considering two directions – the education system and the joint processing of raw materials. In the first area, much has been established. Many African students have traditionally studied in the Russian Federation and continue to do so. In a variety of ways, including those where Western nations are occasionally completely unwilling to provide educational services to foreign nationals. Compared to individuals who had this training in Western nations, it is far more usual to encounter agronomists in Africa who received their education in the USSR and subsequently in Russia.

This is understandable: the West has always needed elements of influence in Africa, and not qualified specialists in key areas for the continent. That being said, many citizens of African countries who received their education in the West are also ready today to actively develop trade relations with China and India – many are already developing them. Just like they are ready to do with Russia. It is a fact.

When discussing the educational direction of Russia's collaboration with African nations, in general, we can say that it already exists and just has to be reinforced, in order for the number of African graduates from Russian colleges to keep rising. And now is the perfect time to do it. Within the frameworks of both higher education and vocational education, as well as all types of training courses—in the most critical and relevant areas.

We believe that the cooperative processing of minerals and strategic raw materials should be pursued. Here, Russia has a unique trump card. Most countries in Africa are rich in natural resources, and a number of others are interesting for their geographical position as hubs – both continentally and internationally. At the same time, Russia possesses vast natural resources as well as the expertise and technology to exploit them.

And that's where a number of tactical options become available. First of all, none of Africa's so-called 'traditional' partners, particularly those in the West, are prepared to support such a course. Their approach is the following: you provide us with your resources, and we will process them in the West. If Russia suggests a solution on this matter, increasing the added value of the material produced, this will greatly advance Russian economic interests, even in those nations where Western stances are still strongly held. This will bolster the nation's longstanding friendship with the continent even more, which is necessary given the competitive nature of today's world.

Second, putting this strategy into practice will make a lot of local processes much easier and make Russian investment projects much more appealing. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, as resource-rich regions, Russia and Africa, working together on processing projects throughout the continent, can further challenge the supremacy of Western financial instruments. Ultimately, it defies logic that a large number of global hubs for the commercialization of important strategic resources are situated in the West, given that the West is not the legitimate owner of these resources. In addition to advancing its own financial and commercial interests, Russia can undoubtedly assist the many African countries who choose to abandon this enforced model.

The final benefit of this strategy is, of course, the further consolidation of Russia's diplomatic and political standing throughout the continent. Traditionally friendly Russian-African relations, successful cooperation in the military-security field, active interaction in the political, cultural, sports and youth fields, but also, of course, successful joint economic projects with real added value – represent the key to the overall success of Africa and Russia within the framework of the multipolar world order.

Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov, entrepreneur and political observer, expert in issues relating to Africa and the Middle East

Author: **Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov**

Sahel Alliance Seeks Economic Independence



Today's developments on the African continent, in particular in some Sahel countries, run completely counter to the plans that Western regimes have long nurtured both for the region itself and for the entire continent. These processes, including those aimed at increasing economic independence, are very encouraging for Africans, but they also call on supporters of a sovereign Africa to be vigilant against the destabilizing actions taken by forces nostalgic for unipolar, Western-oriented world order.

The Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des Etats du Sahel, AES), currently consisting of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, is increasingly strengthening the Pan-African line with clear reference points to a multipolar world order. From now on, the anxiety can be clearly observed, including in the Western press, due to the fact that the AES has become not just a defense and security alliance of three African states, where the West had very strong positions and interests in the near past, but also an alliance that is actively moving towards political, diplomatic and economic unification.

For reference: Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger together make up about 2.8 million square kilometers of territory (i.e., 5 territories of mainland France) with some

67 million inhabitants. Mali and Burkina Faso are among the largest gold-producing countries in Africa and rank in the top twenty globally. Niger has one of the world's largest reserves of uranium.

And if today most citizens in these countries are very enthusiastic about this common military alliance, which, including the massive support of the population of these countries, thwarted the recent plans for military intervention of Western and pro-Western forces against Niger (after the military removed the strictly Western-oriented former president), then, of course, economic and financial issues are also of utmost priority for these countries in overcoming the obstacles created by Western regimes and their agents on the African continent. This is also important for the successful continuation of already initiated processes.

One of the main obstacles on the path to full economic independence for Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, as well as for many other countries in West and Central Africa, is certainly a neocolonial financial instrument called the CFA Franc, a regional currency controlled by France, which is essentially one of the main pillars of Paris's long-term dominance in a number of countries on the continent.

But in the case of the Sahel Alliance member countries, a big shift is being observed. African news agency (APA News), located in the capital of Senegal, Dakar, put the question bluntly a few days ago: "Are Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger going to leave the CFA franc system?" And this is no coincidence.

Indeed, financial experts from the three countries recently met in the capital of Mali, Bamako, and noted the need to create an economic and, what is interesting, monetary union, in addition to other measures of cooperation in the areas of trade, improving infrastructure, and joint measures to ensure food and energy security. Again, according to APA News, the very fact of mentioning the need for a joint monetary union is a real and direct threat to the CFA franc system according to a number of observers.

For my part, I will add the following, especially in view of the importance of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in terms of their joint area, demographic factor and their large natural resources, of course, without forgetting about the massive support for the chosen line of the three countries among residents of several other countries in the region and continent. It is worth also remembering that the initiatives of the three Sahel Alliance member countries are supported by the two largest world powers in the multipolar world order, Russia and China.

But as many Pan-African experts correctly point out, all three countries, as well as their allies, should be extremely attentive to any further attempts to interfere with the above processes within the framework of traditional and not only

Western methods of destabilization. Many Africans still remember what the late Muammar Gaddafi's idea to create a single gold-backed African currency cost him.

Another thing is that the West today is more limited than ever in its actions, or more precisely, in obtaining a positive result in its attempts to destabilize the situation due to the presence of forces, including in Africa, that are ready to actively resist such attempts, both in the person of sovereign and truly independent African authorities, relying on the massive support of citizens from many countries on the continent, and in general, taking into account the processes taking place within the global changes on the world stage.

Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov, entrepreneur, political commentator, expert on African and Middle Eastern issues

Author: **Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov**

The reasons for the motivation of number of African countries to withdraw their gold-currency reserves from the US



Several African nations are beginning to take decisions in order to repatriate their gold-currency reserves from the United States, notably Nigeria and Ghana. In fact – this process is in reality truly global in scope – both at the African continental level and internationally. De facto, Washington himself sawed off the branch on which he had been sitting for a long time. And with the current realities specific to the framework of the multipolar world order, the process will only accelerate.

Events in relation with the dedollarization of the global economy, as well as the liberation from Western financial instruments – continue to gain momentum. And if earlier analysts attributed the main role in this process to the BRICS countries, which, by the way, was largely true, now more and more countries and regions of the world, including in the recent past – considered as important partners of the West at the regional and continental level, take their example from the main forces promoting the multipolar world.

Nigeria has initiated plans to repatriate its gold reserves from the United States, signaling a proactive stance in safeguarding its wealth. This decision is coming in response to mounting concerns about the downturn of the US economy, writes the Nigerian media *The Street Journal*. The same publication also indicates that the decision reflects Nigeria's determination to assert its sovereignty and pursue independence in the global arena. By taking control of its gold reserves, Nigeria can demonstrate its capability to manage its affairs without external interference.

Beyond Nigeria, another English-speaking West African country should be mentioned with a similar case – Ghana. Among the given reasons, there are many similarities with the Nigerian case. African economic experts say Ghana's actions come at a crucial juncture amidst escalating global economic uncertainties and mounting concerns about the stability of the US financial system. According to Dr. Joseph Mensah, an economist specializing in international finance, "Ghana's move to withdraw its gold reserves from American vaults is a prudent measure to mitigate risks and safeguard against potential economic volatility".

Now in terms of perspectives. Of course, mentioning Nigeria and Ghana may at first glance seem quite surprising to many observers of the African continent, given the proximity of the two countries to Anglo-Saxon interests. Especially those of Washington and London. On the other hand and in the context of current global processes characteristic to the multipolar era, it should not be particularly surprising that the active or progressive process of abandoning US and Western financial and economic blackmail is gaining momentum. And so not only among the fully committed supporters for the international multipolar order, but also among those whom the West has long considered, and probably continue to do so, as its close partners. Although and naturally – the Western establishment itself cannot in principle be associated as a worthy and reliable partner – the latter considering all non-Western states, therefore the world majority – as appendages for its enrichment.

The Nigeria case is of course particularly interesting. Leading demographic force on the African continent with a population of more than 220 million inhabitants, one of the three main economies in Africa (both in terms of nominal GDP and in the case of GDP at purchasing power parity), an important continental energy and military power. And it is also very important to remember that Nigeria recently announced its desire to join the BRICS.

Considering all these factors, and especially the last one, it is not difficult to guess why it is so important today for Nigeria to actively initiate the process of liberation from Western control mechanisms, particularly in the economic and financial fields.

Of course, the Washingtonian regime, as well as its Western vassals, will do everything possible to slow down this process in a number of African states. However, it will be more difficult than ever for the NATO-Western minority to be able to achieve this. And there are several reasons for that. First, the dedollarization of the global economy and the liberation from Western instruments of domination is spreading at a high pace. This is observed today in various parts of the world – in Asia, Latin America, and of course, Africa as well. This is all the more so since on the African continent a backbone of forces has already been formed which have clearly and firmly chosen the path of integration and defense of the multipolar world order.

Secondly, the precedent created by the collective West, first and foremost by the US regime, with regard to our country and its assets – has set a definitive point, including for the countries of the world, which, in a still recent past, considered relations with the Western minority as a priority orientation.

And thirdly, the fear of the myth considering the West supposedly omnipotent is not even so much a thing at the end of its life cycle, but de facto something that has already disappeared. By the way, this is also entirely logical, given the fact that the multipolar world is not a prospect, but indeed a global reality, no matter how the Western minority tries to deny this reality. This means that Washington and its vassals will have to answer for their criminal actions and face all the consequences for the committed crimes.

It is also obvious that within the framework of these processes, including of course on the African continent, Western pseudo-elites will once again blame Russia and China. Instead of simply recognizing that all of this is just the direct consequence of their own actions and conduct. Something the Western minority is in no way capable of doing. The bottom line is that its arrogance and hypocrisy cannot de-facto influence the processes of the modern era.

Mikhail Gamandiy-Egorov, entrepreneur, political commentator, expert on African and Middle Eastern issues

Author: **Viktor Mikhin**

Sudan is on the brink of a terrible humanitarian catastrophe



Sudan is fast becoming the world's worst humanitarian tragedy, according to many politicians and diplomats, and the recent famine and displacement are just the tip of the iceberg. More than a year of war in Sudan has led to a wave of extreme violence, resulting in widespread death, disease and the destruction of cities, towns and villages.

Essence and history of the conflict

The situation is exacerbated by the constant escalation of hostilities and the mobilisation of the populations of the warring parties – the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. The conflict is constantly escalating, with numerous armed movements, tribal militias, political and ideological groups gradually joining the hostilities. Weapons are being distributed to the civilian population, further exacerbating the scale and intensity of the conflict. The effects of the war are now clearly visible throughout Sudan and beyond its borders, with regional and international actors supporting the various factions for their own interests.

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan exacerbates the already complex challenges of delivering aid, as both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces insist on enforcing certain routes, which are rejected by the opposing faction. The crisis is further exacerbated by widespread crimes and atrocities

committed against civilians on ethnic, tribal, regional and political grounds, including murder, rape, displacement, theft and destruction of property, bombings and attacks on service providers. In this context, the failure of the international community to stop the brutal war in Sudan, to put pressure on the warring parties or to respond effectively to the global humanitarian tragedy is a matter of grave concern. Despite the enormous loss of life, widespread destruction, horrific massacres and daily crimes and violations, international intervention remains inadequate. UN reports warn that 18 million Sudanese are at risk of starvation, 70 per cent of health facilities are inaccessible and eight million people have been displaced, including 1.7 million outside Sudan. Sudan's cereal production has fallen by 64 per cent in the past year, leading to a staggering 73 per cent increase in food prices.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has reported that Sudan is facing the world's largest child displacement crisis, with 14 million Sudanese children in urgent need of life-saving assistance in a range of critical areas, including health, nutrition, education and water. More than 3.5 million children have been forcibly displaced since the start of the war. Some 7.4 million children lack access to safe drinking water, more than three million children under the age of five suffer from acute malnutrition, and 19 million are out of school.

Humanitarian catastrophe in Darfur

Sarah Mustafa, a Sudanese activist from Darfur (a region in western Sudan, an area of inter-ethnic conflict), believes that women, children, the elderly and people with chronic illnesses are in catastrophic conditions in displaced persons camps and shelters. More than five million people in the area are on the brink of starvation, a consequence of both the war-induced deterioration of the agricultural season and insufficient rainfall. The people of Darfur, especially women, have borne the brunt of the war since 2002, she said, calling on international and regional organizations to prioritize the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need.

International organizations have also called on the conflicting parties to establish safe humanitarian corridors to facilitate the delivery of aid, with obstruction of aid delivery resulting in numerous deaths in the camps. Continued international and Sudanese warnings of a dire humanitarian crisis have gone unheeded by the conflicting parties. Instead of heeding these warnings, they persist in pursuing a military solution, which after a year of continuous fighting seems increasingly untenable. The Sudanese Armed Forces are preparing for an escalation of hostilities following the involvement of factions in Darfur that have joined the army. Mobilizations are underway,

with strong reinforcements being sent to the capital Khartoum and Gezira State, according to local journalists.

For its part, the Rapid Support Forces have declared themselves to be in a state of permanent readiness to defend themselves and resist attacks by the Sudanese armed forces and allied groups. This means that the war will continue unabated, leading to more humanitarian disasters. Khaled Omar, leader of the Sudanese Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces (Taqaddum), warned of the devastating consequences of the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the looming threat of famine. Amid growing divisions exacerbated by the current crisis, there is an urgent need for unity, he said, highlighting the plight of Sudanese refugees and displaced people. The Taqaddum leader also highlighted the collapse of basic services such as health and education, as well as the obstruction of humanitarian access and the inadequate response of the international community.

Adel Sayed Ahmed, a Sudanese writer and political analyst, blames the United Nations for the humanitarian tragedy in Sudan. He argues that the weakness of UN mechanisms to deliver food and medicine to the Sudanese people is the main cause of this tragedy. The Sudanese writer criticised the UN's decision to distribute aid to both sides of the conflict, saying that the UN Security Council should prioritize the lives of millions of Sudanese facing starvation. He called on the UN to mobilize resources related to international humanitarian law, implement a ceasefire and establish safe humanitarian corridors.

Unsuccessful policies of the UN and its bodies

The United Nations has warned that Sudan is facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent history after nearly a year of war. Fighting between the army, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, has killed tens of thousands of people since April last year as the threat of famine looms amid international inaction. "By all indicators – because of the sheer scale of humanitarian needs, the number of displaced people and the famine – Sudan is one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent times," said Edem Wosornu, Director of Operations at the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"A humanitarian travesty is taking place in Sudan under the cover of international inattention and inaction," Wosornu told the UN Security Council on behalf of OCHA chief Martin Griffiths. "Simply put, we are failing the people of Sudan," she added, describing the desperation of the population. According to the UN, more than eight million people have been displaced by the conflict. But other, more comprehensive figures put the number of displaced people in the country at least 10 million, mostly the elderly, women and children.

In early March, the Security Council called for an immediate ceasefire for the duration of Ramadan and for improved humanitarian access. However, due to intransigence and disagreements between the warring parties, a ceasefire has not been reached. More than 18 million Sudanese are facing severe food shortages – 10 million more than this time last year – while 730,000 Sudanese children are estimated to be severely malnourished.

Martin Griffiths warned the UN Security Council that “almost the entire population of Sudan could face catastrophic food shortages in parts of the country in the coming months”. Carl Skau, Deputy Executive Director of the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP), also said: “If we are to prevent Sudan from becoming the world’s largest hunger crisis, coordinated efforts and joint diplomacy are urgent and critical. He warned that there was a “high risk” of mass starvation in the country in May, when the agricultural season begins. Indeed, all this was known before, but all the UN and its influential bodies have done is state the facts. And how can one expect anything useful from those UN officials who unconditionally fulfil the will of the West, first and foremost the US, to consolidate its influence in this country?

It is clear that such a complex situation requires urgent action by the international community, Sudan’s allies, neighboring countries and all Sudanese parties to rapidly deliver life-saving assistance to the millions of people affected by this conflict. It also requires significant donor funding and the consolidation of international and regional efforts to help Sudan and its leaders find a political solution to this crisis and end the war. The country is in urgent need of peace, which can only be achieved through a cessation of hostilities by the warring parties. It is also vital that all parties refrain from using hunger as a weapon of war and commit to opening safe corridors for the delivery of humanitarian aid. Only with such a policy can we hope to resolve the deep humanitarian crisis in Sudan sooner rather than later.

Victor MIKHIN, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences

Author: **Aleksei Bolshakov**

Russia-Madagascar: a lot or a little?



In a land where the mountains sleep soundly,
And the Southern Cross climbed into the sky,
The clouds have come down to the valley.

My friend, you must be careful.

For few of us have ever been

In mysterious Madagascar.

Yuri Vizbor

Do you think 51 years is a long time or a short time? It is, for example, two and a half life cycles of lemurs or three lives of predatory mammalian fossils. I chose these rare animals as an example for a reason. If my readers are familiar with the masterpiece of animated cinema “Madagascar”, they will easily remember that these animals acted in the cartoon as indigenous inhabitants of this mysterious island. Where did I get the number from? It’s simple: that’s how

many years have passed since the establishment of Russian-Malagasy diplomatic relations.

The first attempts to establish contact began back in 1723 during the reign of Peter the Great. The Russian emperor, who was eager to find new markets for the country's growing economy, learnt from Vice-Admiral Wilster that the republic of Libertalia was located near the eastern coast of Africa, where merchant ships sailing to India or returning to Europe passed. The idea of establishing relations with the pirate kingdom immediately absorbed Peter the Great.

However, the initiative failed for technical reasons: two 32-gun frigates, the Amsterdam Galey and the Decron de Livde, were defective and had to return to Revel without even reaching the Danish Straits.

Subsequent attempts were also unsuccessful. And after the death of Peter the Great, attempts to establish diplomatic relations with the distant, unexplored and alluring country of Madagascar, unfortunately, stopped. However, one of the largest islands in the world has become an object of interest of our country more than once.

Official diplomatic, trade and economic relations between Moscow and Antananarivo were established only in 1972, when, 12 years after Madagascar gained independence in the course of the national democratic revolution, the pro-imperialist regime of Philibert Tsiranana was ousted.

An optimistic view regarding the future of the relationship

This is how A. V. Andreev, Russian Ambassador to Madagascar, characterized the prospects for the development of Russian-Malagasy relations in a recent interview with the International Life magazine. Such "optimism" has a very strong foundation, backed by many bilateral agreements: agreements on military and military-technical cooperation, agreement on the use of Madagascar's debt to the Russian Federation to finance development programmes on the territory of the Republic of Madagascar, agreements in the sphere of humanitarian cooperation (for example, since 1972, more than 5 thousand Malagasy students have received education in Russia), etc.

A new impetus in bilateral relations was the victory of the incumbent leader Andry Rajoelina in the presidential elections held last December. In a dispatch issued on the results of the elections in the Republic of Madagascar, Moscow expressed its satisfaction with the success of the elections and reaffirmed its commitment to active co-operation with the leadership of Madagascar. The

statement reiterated Russia's desire to strengthen "traditionally friendly" ties between the two countries and develop "fruitful co-operation in various areas".

This statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry shows Moscow's clear desire to further strengthen bilateral relations with Antananarivo. By highlighting the success of the elections, Russia is demonstrating its confidence in Madagascar's political stability under the leadership of Andry Rajoelina, who has managed to consolidate the electorate around him and stabilise the situation in the republic.

Despite the fact that the country has experienced several shocks under his leadership: the Covid-19 pandemic, the shaken economy, the massive famine of 2021-2022 in the south of the country caused by a severe drought (Russia is still helping to cope with the consequences by providing humanitarian aid to the island), this has not led to a decline in his popular support. Contrary to the crises that have occurred, Madagascar showed stable economic growth in 2017-2022, with a decline in GDP only in 2020, the year of the pandemic.

Andry Rajoelina's first term took place against the backdrop of major geopolitical disruptions, namely the hostilities in Ukraine. The government of Madagascar took a particular stance, deciding not to condemn Russia, which affected Madagascar's diplomatic relations with Ukraine's allies.

For example, during the vote on the anti-Russian resolution at the United Nations General Assembly condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, 17 African countries, including Madagascar, decided to abstain, disrupting the formation of the so-called anti-Russian "chorus of the West".

The case of Madagascar's former foreign minister, Richard Randriamandrato, was particularly telling. He was dismissed from his post after voting in favour of the UN General Assembly resolution not to recognize the referendums in the DNR, LNR, Zaporizhia and Kherson regions. In contrast, the Malagasy authorities have always maintained a position of neutrality in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

"The Malagasy society, which is characterized by such traits as national pride and in which disappointment with the neo-colonial methods of the West has accumulated, continues to defend its right to an independent policy guided by national interests," said Russian Ambassador to Madagascar A.V. Andreev, referring to Antananarivo's foreign policy.

Moscow is paying Antananarivo in hard by supporting Madagascar in its territorial dispute with France over the restoration of its legal sovereignty over the island of Eppes. "France, which presents itself as a defender of

international law and the territorial integrity of states, continues to illegally hold on to other people's land," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova stressed, commenting on the territorial dispute between the states.

Of course, Russian-Malagasy relations have room to grow. As the aforementioned Ambassador Andreyev noted, the potential of bilateral relations is "insufficiently effectively used", especially in the trade and economic sphere. Contracts have been signed with the GAZ Group for the supply of cars for sanitation services, contracts for UC Rusal's participation in bauxite mining, and so on. But is it a lot? Or is it not enough? Only time will tell. But one thing is certain – the "future of our relations" can be looked at with optimism.

Alexey BOLSHAKOV, international journalist

Author: **Aleksei Bolshakov**

Russia-Egypt: Peaceful Atom Unites



The African continent is one of the fastest growing energy markets in the world, driven by the economic and demographic potential of countries on the continent. Such a leap poses new challenges for African countries. The energy industry remains one of the main challenges.

As a major player in the market, Russia is the partner of choice for many countries in the nuclear energy field. The Rosatom State Corporation currently holds about 70 percent of the global export market for construction of new nuclear power plants. According to the Director General of the Corporation, Alexey Likhachev, its export volume exceeded \$10 billion in 2022. He also said that about \$200 billion worth of international orders would be fulfilled in the next 10 years.

In total, nuclear cooperation and interim planning agreements have now been signed with 15 sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana, Zambia, Kenya, South Africa, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and others; as well as with the North African countries: Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and

Morocco. Although none of these agreements, except for the Egyptian ones, have resulted in firm commitments, they demonstrate the scale of the African continent's interest in the development of nuclear energy.

The history of Rosatom's cooperation with African countries dates back to the era of nuclear programme development. Egypt was the first in the Middle East to receive a Soviet-built research reactor in 1961. In total, more than a hundred industrial facilities were built in Egypt with the assistance of the USSR, including the Helwan Metallurgical Plant, the Nag Hammadi Aluminium Smelter, the Aswan-Alexandria power lines, etc.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, cooperation between the two countries continued and even became more intense, and after al-Sisi's victory in the 2014 elections, relations between the countries improved markedly. Russia became the first country outside the Arab world to receive a visit from the current Egyptian president. In February 2015, Russian President Vladimir Putin made an official visit to Cairo, which ended with an agreement on Rosatom's participation in the construction of the first Egyptian nuclear power plant, El-Dabaa, as well as the creation of a free trade zone between Egypt and the Eurasian Economic Union. The El-Dabaa nuclear power plant, with four Russian-designed 1.2 gigawatt VVER (water-water energetic reactor) reactor units, is expected to generate more than 10 percent of Egypt's total electricity and provide a consistent baseload power source for 20 million people.

In addition to producing electricity, the El-Dabaa nuclear power plant will also have the capacity to desalinate coastal seawater, which will be used to fill and replenish the primary and secondary circuits of the four reactors, sustain the industrial and emergency water supplies for the plant, and provide drinking water to maintenance personnel. El-Dabaa could expand its desalination capacity to 100,000 cubic meters per day.

This reflects Cairo's desire to build more desalination facilities, provide the population with reliable sources of water, and mitigate the impacts of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile flow into Egypt.

Speaking in numbers, the construction of all four El-Dabaa power units requires up to \$30 billion in financing: a Russian loan of \$25 billion will cover 85% of the costs, and Egypt will finance the rest. Under the terms of the agreement, Egypt must begin repaying the loan with a 3% annual interest rate from October 2029. It is also worth noting that payments can be made not only in US dollars, but also in national currencies, which is mutually beneficial for the two countries and corresponds to Russia's multipolar policy.

“Rosatomoskepticism”

The American publication Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is skeptical about the implementation of the El-Dabaa NPP project. “With ongoing sanctions and hostilities in Ukraine, Moscow may deprioritize such foreign projects and give preference to its own military budget, civil servants, and infrastructure,” they write.

Firstly, Russia was and still remains the main player in the nuclear energy market, which has always fulfilled its contractual obligations. If any difficulties arose, it was the fault of the so-called allies, as during the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant in southern Turkey, when there were problems with the supply of electrical equipment from the German Siemens Energy.

Secondly, who else will do it if not Rosatom? Maybe French EDF? The effectiveness of cooperation with this company can be judged by the Olkiluoto-3 nuclear power plant project in Finland: construction took 18 years and the original estimate was exceeded at least five times. Olkiluoto-3 could not be launched due to some minor malfunctions, but it has now been put into operation. The most interesting thing is that new reactors in France are being built and maintained by specialists from the American Westinghouse, known for the construction of the “wonderful” Fukushima-1 nuclear power plant.

Thirdly, who are the judges? Information disseminated by a publication that is funded by “dubious” charities should be viewed with skepticism. In this regard, one cannot help but wonder whether the authors of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, who systematically publish anti-Russian materials, are biased?

El-Dabaa NPP is Russia’s flagship project on the African continent, which goes well beyond the construction of the facility. Moscow is working closely with Egyptian specialists, thereby developing nuclear energy in this North African country from scratch, which involves training personnel, providing technical services, etc. In other words, Russia supports Egypt on its path towards sovereign energy development. Cairo also places great importance on this project. Egypt calls the day November 19, 2015, when the NPP building contract was signed, a historical event, and in 2022 the government officially established an annual holiday on November 19 – Nuclear Energy Day.

This is, indeed, the first project of this scale for Cairo, and therefore the partners have carefully defined mutual obligations. Monitoring and research show that other African countries, following Egypt, are interested in Russian nuclear technology, but typically experience severe bottlenecks in financing. The economic success of El-Dabaa could be another step towards a stronger Russian presence in Egypt and the Middle East, no less important than the building of the Aswan High Dam.

Alexey Bolshakov, international journalist

Author: Yuliya Novitskaya

Africa is gaining strength for a major push



As a region with unlimited potential for demographic and economic growth, Africa is rapidly gaining weight in the modern world. It is no longer an object for someone else's manipulations (it is perfectly understandable whose), but is beginning to seriously defend its own interests. It is no longer the backward continent that still sits in the heads of many Western politicians. Its current state can be compared to China in the 1990s – it is gaining strength before a powerful leap. And since almost all kinds of minerals and natural resources are concentrated here (according to preliminary estimates, about a third of the world's reserves), this continent is a tidbit for the West, which has oppressed it for centuries.

Colonial policy has for centuries prevented the development of the peoples of Africa, who are now simply tired of being used only as cheap raw materials and free labour. On the contrary, Moscow has always played a key role in liberating many African countries from colonial oppression, assisted in the formation of their statehood, and helped to build their defense and economic capacity. We

see Africans as equal partners, and they, in turn, believe and trust us because we do not hold a grudge. Unlike all others who come to their continent, we do not have the background of colonizers. Lately, Africans have been showing the world their love for our country in a somewhat unexpected way – with the help of Russian flags. This was the case in Niamey, the capital of Niger, when people demanded the withdrawal of its military from the country near the French base, and in Mali, when the terrorists in Kidali were defeated. Both there and there, along with national flags, people were holding Russian flags in their hands. It is obvious that Africa, seeing the great changes in Russia, seeing its strong president, who was not afraid to go out alone against the entire Western world, also wants real freedom. Exactly the real one, not the one that is declared only on paper.

The former “masters of life” are making desperate attempts to hold on to their influence, which is weakening day by day. Blackmail and attempts to intimidate African countries in order to prevent their rapprochement with our country are being used. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, commenting on the West’s desire to restore Africa’s colonial dependence, said that “American, British and other European delegations regularly appear there, with a persistence worthy of better use, demanding from African states not to cooperate with the Russian Federation, not to break out of the common discipline, under which they, the countries of the so-called collective West, understand the restoration of colonial dependence, but in a new form”.

Since 2002, almost all the countries of the continent have united into the African Union, whose main goal, along with solving common problems, has been to fight neocolonial policies. Today, this Union is striving to become a real force on the world stage, with which the West will have to reckon first and foremost. Experts note that the African Union is well-placed to increase its influence in the world in the very near future. The fact of its admission to the G20 as a permanent member is a confirmation of this.

Every day it is becoming more and more obvious that the collective West is losing the struggle for Africa. And its reaction in this case is absolutely traditional for it, and therefore predictable to the teeth – denial of the right of these countries to an independent policy, threats, pressure, blackmail, attempts to enslave them with unsustainable loans. On the background of growing self-awareness, Africans themselves are increasingly demonstrating their desire for independent development. They want to live in a just world and are well aware that it is Russia that has a leading role to play in building it.

Yuliya NOVITSKAYA, writer, journalist and correspondent for “New Eastern Outlook”

Author: **Mohamed Lamine KABA**

African languages as a combat weapon to shrink the sphere of influence of the unipolarist West in Africa



By way of introduction, language is a real factor in the manifestation of the cultural sovereignty of a people and an excellent instrument of diplomacy, allowing a State to acquire a dynamic force on the world stage. To be convinced, since the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989 and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the world's hegemonic powers have positioned themselves at the forefront of the international scene, each with their own national language. In this context of hostility, geostrategic positioning and expansion of spheres of influence between the superpowers, Africa was kept in the framework of the Berlin conference from November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885 during which, the powers European colonialists fought to control the interior of the continent. Language is a powerful lever for maintaining this pattern to this day.

It is in this journey of world political history that the former colonial powers designed, in their respective languages, all-out training programs imposed on their former colonies in order to perpetuate their multidimensional domination. This is how African languages, including written ones, were relegated to the status of patois of little importance. These programs, designed with a logic of subhumanization of the African people, largely contribute to the subjugation of

generations of men and women of Africa since contact with the European mission and expedition to explore the deep lands of the continent. Which makes the cultural domination of the peoples of Africa, the daughter of the civilizing mission led on the continent by the imperialist powers, notably England, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Italy.

After decades of use of these colonial languages both as official languages and as languages of instruction in African States, it emerges from the examination which results from this use of them in internal political affairs and external of these, that African education systems have not achieved the performance desired by the people at the grassroots. This insufficient performance of national education systems has a negative impact on the performance of public administration in African states. It is to respond to this social, political, economic and cultural challenge that we are proposing to African leaders the introduction of national languages into primary (nursery and elementary), secondary (middle and high school) education programs and academic (first cycle, second cycle and third cycle).

In the following lines, we will attempt, with complete objectivity, to demonstrate the importance of the introduction of African languages into primary, secondary and university education programs in the fight against mental alienation and then, we will discuss the impact of this on the strategic and diplomatic positioning of Africa on the world political scene.

Importance of African languages in the reform of the overall African education system and the fight against mental alienation of the people of Africa

Africa lagging behind in world history. A people without culture is a people who are destined to fade away under the effect of the shock of cultures. Because a people identifies and recognizes itself by its cultural and civilizational identity. To be convinced, the annals of the political history of international relations indicate the clash of cultures between the West and the East as a factor which, for a long time, has led humanity to catastrophe. That is, Pan-Germanism versus Pan-Slavism. The mutation of this clash of cultures is leading today to the proliferation of hybrid war, which necessarily also calls for hybrid peace. In other words, proxy wars or proxy wars with allies, as in the case of the Russian Federation's special military operation in Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022. The neo-Nazis who have come to power in Ukraine have begun the process of ousting the Russian language from various spheres of state and public life in Donbas (Eastern Ukraine), where Russian has been spoken since the ancient times of Kievan Rus. The ban on the Russian language was

accompanied by terror against its speakers, against the Russian Orthodox Church, where services were conducted in the Russian language. The Russian President explained that he had decided to launch a special military operation in the interests of the residents of Donbas, who had become victims of “genocide on the part of the Kiev regime”.

Thus, the military interventions of the United States of America in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Palestine (always in complicity with Israel, France and NATO) and many others throughout the world, have generated and continue to generate negative repercussions on the stability of African institutions. However, guided by the spirit of multipolarism and committed to helping African states recover from Western domination and manipulation, the Russian Federation has established itself as a pole of protest against the unipolar world order imposed on the rest of the world. by the United States. Hence, the transposition of proxy war to the African continent. What role can African languages play in the fight against this mental alienation of Africans from the global West?

Language being a powerful lever for the manifestation of the cultural and civilizational identity of a people, African languages must replace the languages inherited from colonization to stop the siren of neocolonialism on the continent. They could allow Africans to access the light of science which is not the prerogative of any people, and therefore, impersonal and accessible to all peoples of the world. From all common sense, the promotion and valorization of these could certainly reverse the trend of the teachings of servitude contained in the programs developed under the expertise of Westerners and imposed on Africa to give a distant future to neocolonialism on the continent. African languages therefore appear to be factors in accelerating and stimulating the social, political, economic, cultural, scientific, technical and technological progress of African States. The pride of being and feeling African is there, especially since all the world powers use their own languages. Eloquent proof that colonial languages slow down the development process in Africa.

Impact of the promotion, enhancement and use of African languages in African affairs on the strategic and diplomatic positioning of Africa on the global political scene

Based on the diplomatic trilogy (Soft-power, Hard-power and Smart-power), language emerges as a fundamental instrument, without which we would not be talking about diplomacy. The Vienna Conventions on diplomatic relations of 1961 and on consular relations of 1964 give a special place to language in the dynamics of the world scene. This means that each country, with the exception of African countries (which still remain in the 21st century attached to the colonial languages of subjugation), uses its own language in bilateral and

multilateral international negotiations. One cannot walk on one's head, feet in the air, and pretend to compete in a race, with someone who walks with one's feet exactly placed on the ground. This better explains the tragic consequences of colonial languages on the geopolitical and geostrategic positioning of Africa on the international scene.

From the above, it is up to Africa's political leaders to understand this situation which has only lasted, and to make a courageous choice to replace the languages inherited from colonization with African languages. Because African languages are part of the values that define the African and without which, there would be no African. Assimilating is not bad in itself, but assimilating is the worst thing that could happen to a people.

In conclusion, African languages constitute a great weapon that Africans are called upon to use to completely get rid of the hybridization in which they are immersed and change the configuration of the global political scene, carving out an enviable place for themselves. African lands contain the strategic resources the world needs to function. Linguistic diplomacy, accompanied by Soft-power, Hard-power and Smart-power, constitutes an accelerating lever for social, political, economic, cultural, scientific, technical and technological progress in Africa. The salvation of Africans lies there, and Russia offers the guarantee of this profound change in African societies! So, dare to innovate!

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Russia's Free Grain in Somalia: Russia Drops Food Where the US Drops Bombs



Somalia as a Manifestation of US's Development Model is a Glaring Failure

Russia started delivery of free grain to Somalia, the first country in which the US implemented the model it had been prevented from attempting by the presence of the USSR. The result of this model of interference for 34 years is evident in poverty and food insecurity not only in Somalia but other countries with US and allied bases. Russia's delivery will be followed by similar free aid to other countries, including where the US has military and drone bases spying on and distracting the host governments from promoting food production, but instead enlisting them to fight 'terrorism'. This fight against endless cycles of terrorism prevents production and trade, but the US has not been proposing food deliveries to these countries. Instead, it has been using them as a justification to pressure Russia to open the Black Sea Grain Initiative and have Western companies profiting by directing grain volumes to Europeans to feed their dear farm animals (here). Meanwhile, the 'terrorists' the US has been

purporting to fight have been expanding along with the US military presence, (here) showing a causal relationship.

US Priority; Fighting ‘Terrorism’ While Creating Hunger

The planned recipients of Russia’s free grain are Burkina Faso, Mali, Central Africa Republic, Somalia, Eritrea, and Zimbabwe. Nearly all these countries exhibit patterns of US (or French) military bases and recent “counterterrorism” activity, as reported by the intercept (here). By 2019, the US ran a base in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, Bamako Mali, while the French ran operations in Central Africa Republic. The US and its Western allies have for decades hijacked these African governments and distracted them from development while redirecting their resources to ‘fight terrorists’ in the Sahel, which I will illustrate later is linked back to the US. The issue is even interested in Somalia, where the US has five bases in Baledogle, Bosasso, Galcayo, Kismayo, and Mogadishu (here). The US could have eliminated terrorism in Somalia, if that was its goal, for civilians to return to food production and trade, noting that some of its bases there are decades old. Instead, the Al Shabaab terror group started (in 2006) and expanded despite US presence since the 1990s, and expansion after 9/11, even according to CIA edited Wikipedia (here). Only the efforts of the weak Somali National Army (SNA), local armed groups, and regional forces have dented Al Shabaab. The group has been justifying more US presence, derailing, socioeconomic development, and preventing Somalia’s integration with neighbors. Meanwhile, Somalia’s population has endured poverty and food insecurity since 1991, with the highest rate of poverty in sub-Saharan Africa at about 69%. One comparable case is Afghanistan, where the US War and later drone campaign suppressed food production and socioeconomic development. Western mainstream media only shrieked alarms of an impending famine (here) a few months after the US withdrew, feigning ignorance of the fact that food production capacity or adequate food reserves could not have been exhausted in a few months. Food production in US-occupied Afghanistan remained low, while opium production increased.

War-exhausted and economically stripped-down Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Libya represent the model of what the US Empire desires for all countries with high development potential. The US was only prevented from implementing this model by the presence of the USSR, such that it gladly implemented it immediately after the latter’s dissolution. Somalia was the first country the US invaded at the dawn of the unipolar world, and the US has maintained interference and a terrorist group that complicates everyone else’s

life at the cost of thousands of lives lost through wars, disease, and starvation (here).

Source of Terror; Terrorists to Replace Soviet Allies

All 7 governments that Wesley Clark revealed that the US planned to destroy (here) have developed terrorism problems with either Al-Qaeda, ISIS, or their local franchise operating in them. Wesley Clark, in a separate revelation from 1991, detailed how Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz divulged that the US was planning to sweep away all Soviet allied governments in countries in which terror groups sprung up later as if they were being swept in. Even the mainstream media today reveals the US's role in creating terrorists. For instance, one documentary from KTN news with the title translating into "Sahel belt no longer livable" created in Swahili for around 200 million people that speak this language in Eastern Africa details how major terrorist groups originated from US actions in Afghanistan, as it armed Arab-Muslim extremists to fight the Soviets during Soviet-Afghan war. It explains that those fighters returned home after the war to form terrorist groups, including Al-Qaeda (is banned in Russia) which later mutated into ISIS (is banned in Russia), Al Shabaab, and those in Sahel. However, it fails to explain why these terrorists pursue unified objectives, justifying US military expansion. Westerners may have thought to use these groups to disrupt grain delivery after they failed to intimidate Russia through sanctions, but there is a precedence; MV Faina.

EAC refuses to be Influenced Though Terror Threats

Another good break for Somalia is that it was admitted into the East African Community (EAC) a few weeks ago, in a move that spells a new beginning for the historically rich country that has faced many challenges since the civil 1991. This event, while failing to gain significance in media space amidst the ongoing Massacre in Gaza and NATO adventure in Ukraine, holds an opportunity to return the country on a path to prosperity; firstly by promoting business and investment into the formerly isolated country area, which will reduce poverty and conflict. Poverty and underdevelopment cause conflict, which in turn exacerbates poverty, forming a vicious cycle. The second avenue through which this step will promote peace is by blurring the divisions between Somalia and the rest of the regions, which may otherwise be exploited in the future for Western-style divide-and-rule wars. Such division has so far been used to

devastate Somalia, as Al Shabaab has been engaged in efforts to isolate and devastate Somalia through its terror incursions in Kenya, including in the Westgate mall that killed 68 and Garissa University College which killed 148 students on the Easter weekend of 2015. These attacks, among others, led to Kenya closing its Somalia border, which devastated trade between both countries, but puppeteers of terrorism gained. Kenya has subsequently signed numerous colonial security cooperation agreements with the UK (here 2021 and here 2023), and the US (here) while terrorists continue killing people in Lamu (here). These security cooperation agreements do not help. The reality of terror puppeteers focusing on isolating Somalia was also seen in 2021 when Somalia renewed its application to Join EAC and Kenya was warming up to it and prepared to open the border. However, sporadic terrorist attacks increased. Somalia's entry into EAC represents the possible realization by East African nations that terrorists are managed from abroad. These nations have rejected participating in isolating helpless Somalis in favor of increasing trade within the region and finding new ways of addressing terrorism threats. The region's future in a multipolar world is promising.

Simon Chege Ndiritu, is a political observer and research analyst from Africa

Author: **Simon Chege Ndiritu**

Africa Demands Reparations for Transatlantic Slavery and Colonization: It should also Reject Neo-Colonialism



African and Caribbean leaders are uniting to pursue reparations for horrendous atrocities perpetrated during transatlantic slavery and colonialism (here). On 30th January 2024, the Ghanaian Times published an article featuring the Guyanese president's appeal to African leaders to expedite mechanisms for reparations for slavery and colonization (here). Similar calls were made by the Ghanaian president, Nana Akufu-Adoo (here) including earlier at the UN General Assembly, where he described how these crimes resulted in adverse economic, social, and psychological effects on Africans. Both presidents addressed the matter during the African Prosperity Dialogue (APD), organized in late January in eastern Ghana. Guyanese President M.I., Ali reminded audiences how the issue of culpability for these crimes had already been resolved since perpetrators had recognized their responsibilities and apologized. Audiences can note that leaders of German and UK states had recognized their colonial atrocities (here), with the former apologizing in November 2023. The Ghanaian president, speaking during the Presidential Panel Dialogue (PPD) part of APD pledged to rally African leaders to develop legal mechanisms for reparations. Also notable was PPD's theme "Leveraging

Reparations for Infrastructure for Africa and Global Africa,” which suggests urgency among some leaders to pursue compensation, including by selecting projects that will be funded with the expected sum, when challenges to the process are overcome.

West’s protecting Illegally-Acquired Wealth

Western Europe and the US feared economic loss if reparations followed emancipation and decolonization, and are still unwilling to surrender some of their illegally acquired wealth to their victims. They wish to maintain economic and political advantages gained from plunder. M.I. Ali noted that facilitators of slavery waited for 100 years after abolition to admit that the practice was a crime, and can delay reparations for the next century. Also, creating a mechanism for reparation needs protection from sabotage by some compromised African leaders, who can be likened to House slaves who protected the masters’ interest over slaves’.

Western Europe and the US still maintain an Atlantic Alliance, based on a global system that resulted from slavery and colonialism, to benefit from controlling global production and trade. Reparations can only be meaningful if Africans and the global south free themselves from the Atlantic alliance, which is based on the transatlantic system that designated Africa and South America as sources of raw materials and cheap labor. The latter system is described below from an excerpt from Hunt’s book *The Making of the West*;

At the center of this new global economy was the Atlantic system, the web of trade routes that bound together Western Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Europeans bought slaves in western Africa, transported them to be sold in the colonies in North and South America and the Caribbean, bought raw commodities such as coffee and sugar that were produced by the new colonial plantations, and then sold those commodities in European ports.

The transatlantic system expanded and Africa’s Land was taken over by Europeans in subsequent centuries, while local populations were used as forced labor to produce cheap goods for Europeans. The Atlantic Alliance to date has kept the global south as a source of raw materials and labor, by arresting real development (here). Today, migrant workers are taking themselves to the US and Western Europe to be modern slaves while resources in the Global South are sold for the cheap to Western countries, which should change.

Western Europe's plunder of Africans and Asians

Africa and Asia engaged in production and trade before Europeans arrived, and must prioritize development rather than accepting exploitative patronization under the West's modern Atlantic Alliance. Modern Slavery and Colonization started with Europeans' quest to inject themselves into previously thriving trade to control it through plunder, sea piracy, and tributes, as noted in the voyage of Vasco da Gama, sponsored by the Portuguese from 1497. A video by History, glorifies da Gama's exploration, and his sea piracy, plunder, and terrorism, as the basis of Europeans' and Americans' wealth today. It features professors Claude Hulet, and Gayle Brunelle from the University of California hailing how da Gama was the first Westerner to navigate to the East African coast and India, to find (not create) spice markets (here). Da Gama, who left Portugal with cannons, returned with valuable spices from Indian Ocean markets and received a hero's welcome, before he was sent on another voyage in 1502. He was tasked to impose a monopoly on the Indian Ocean's trade. He arrived in Mozambique and Sofala where he plundered gold and forced the sultan to pay tribute to Portugal before proceeding to Calicut, India. In Calicut, he captured and tortured captives to threaten the sultan. He later camped in the Indian Ocean, pirating on Muslim ships. The video explains that da Gama was chosen since he was able to use cannons to blast his way into spice markets, events that were followed by looting. The Portuguese returned with looted products, which were sold to Europeans, making Portugal rich and an example for the Dutch, French, Spaniards, and Britons to follow later. The example opened European merchants, and governments, to plot other ways of obtaining exotic goods for free, to be sold at low prices to their populations.

From Indian Ocean Plunder and Piracy to the Atlantic System

Europeans later (In 1699) discovered coffee in the Middle East, but noted that the price was high due to the Arab's monopoly on trade (here). Dutch traders bought coffee plants and established plantations using forced labor in Java, Indonesia, on land seized from natives. The Dutch obtained and sold large amounts of coffee beans to Europe after only two decades. This experiment was repeated in Martinique, the Caribbean, and North and South America using African slave labor. It was introduced in Africa later. In all instances, the approach was the same; forceful acquisition of Natives' land, enslavement of the local population, or acquisition of African slaves, to produce commodities at nearly zero cost and avail them at low prices to Western consumers. Merchants with the government's assistance expanded slave plantations and

diversified to produce sugar and tea. Others made additional incomes by capturing and trading slaves to satisfy rising demand, while European and American consumers obtained previously exotic products at low prices. Repetition of this process for the last 400 years has created the prevailing inequality in the global systems, which must be addressed alongside reparations for slavery and colonization.

Going Forward

Slavery and colonization were deliberate economic crimes created and maintained by Western Europeans and the US against Africans, Asians, and native peoples. Its modern expression, including in the Atlantic alliance, should be pointed out. These practices contributed to the wealth advantage that the transatlantic international system of empires such as the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, British, and American empires, their allies, and successors maintain to date. The deliberate nature of these activities, any effort to allow perpetrators to go without economic consequences, a dangerous precedence in a period of desired shift to a fairer international system. Perpetrators should face repercussions for the same reason that criminals at the village or city level are brought to justice. African leaders should develop mechanisms to guide reparation and reject neocolonialism.

Simon Chege Ndiritu, is a political observer and research analyst from Africa

Author: Viktor Goncharov

Requiem for President Macron's African Policy



On 26 July 2023, senior members of Niger's presidential guard, normally tasked with protecting President Mohamed Bazoum, announced that they had ousted him from power, holding him hostage inside his official residence.

Subsequently, on 28 July, General Abdourahamane Tiani, the commander of the presidential guard, declared himself the head of the military-run National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, and the former chief of army staff, General Salifou Mody, who was dismissed by President Bazoum in March, was appointed his deputy.

The military coup in one of the world's poorest countries took many people by surprise, including Western experts who saw it as a key ally of the United States and France in the fight against the growing jihadist movement in the Sahel zone and believed that it was on a stable development trajectory. Moreover, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Niger "a model of democracy" in Africa at a press conference during a March visit. Therefore, according to The New York Times, this coup was a serious setback for the West's interests, whose policy of imposing "liberal democracy" in Africa suffered a crushing defeat. However, France, Niger's former colonial power, took a particularly hard hit politically. According to former Austrian Foreign

Minister Karin Kneissl, the military takeover in Niger, following similar events in Mali and Burkina Faso, marks the end of the so-called “France-Afrique” policy. She also added that African countries are currently choosing China, Russia, India and Turkey as partners instead of France.

One of the fundamental reasons behind the coup was rivalry within the country’s ruling political elite. It should be noted that Mohamed Bazoum belongs to the Arab community, which accounts for a mere 1.5 percent of the country’s population, while his predecessor Mahamadou Issoufou is from the Hausa ethnic group is a majority in the Sahel zone. Therefore, when the elected President Bazoum, who promised to follow the political course of his predecessor, reshuffled the highest bodies of state power soon after coming to power, replacing the chief of the General Staff and the Gendarmerie and dismissing six army generals, this caused a split within the ruling elite and intensified the inter-clan struggle for power.

At the same time, he began an anti-corruption campaign directed chiefly against supporters of the previous president, who in his time made Abdourahamane Tiani the head of the presidential guard. During his ten years in office, the latter transformed the guard into a force structure equipped with modern weapons and equipment, exceeding the level of combat training of the regular army. However, President Bazoum significantly reduced its staff and funding in the final months before the coup. According to some sources, these measures taken by the President gave rise to Tiani’s suspicions that he could be the next on the list of candidates for dismissal. At the same time, he informed several army commanders about his plans to overthrow President Bazoum.

The military takeover was roundly condemned by the United States, the EU, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and several international organizations. However, France was one of the most vocal opponents of the new regime, declaring that it did not recognize the legitimacy of the military leaders and demanding the restoration of ousted President Bazoum to power.

The 15-nation ECOWAS has suspended all commercial transactions with Niger, freezing its assets in the community’s banks, and Nigeria, which supplies 70 percent of Niger’s electricity needs, has cut off its supply. It also warned that if the ousted President is not reinstated within two weeks, the organization will take all necessary measures, including military ones, to restore constitutional order in the country. Meanwhile, some experts believe that the community leadership made this statement under pressure from Paris through its proxies in the ranks of this regional organization.

In response, Abdourahamane Tiani, Niger's military leader, said that Niger was ready to defend itself against any military intervention and if it happened, "it would not be an easy ride for those involved."

According to POLITICO, Bazoum's overthrow was another Macron's major policy setback in Africa. After the withdrawal of French troops from Mali and Burkina Faso, Paris stationed 1,500 of its military personnel in Niger to fight terrorism with Bazoum's approval based on the concluded military agreement. It was assumed that this country would become a kind of "laboratory" for testing a new model of Franco-African relations, based on equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation instead of the discredited so-called "France-Afrique" policy.

Shortly after France suspended all its cooperation with the new authorities, Niger's military leaders announced the introduction of retaliatory measures and denounced the military cooperation agreement between the two countries on August 3, demanding to withdraw French troops from the country, and then declared the French ambassador persona non grata, giving him 48 hours to leave the country. Paris, however, refused to meet these demands, arguing that they were not legitimate, and stated that it regarded the ousted President Bazoum as the country's sole legitimate leader.

Relations between the two countries soon became so tense that during a protest in front of the base hosting French military forces in Niamey, attended by a New York Times reporter, demonstrators carried a coffin they said was meant for the French president and brandished signs reading "Death to France". As the newspaper notes, President Macron's refusal to heed the calls of Niger's new leaders to recall his ambassador and withdraw his troops from the country is considered untenable and unacceptable by most analysts and even some European and French diplomats.

On 24 September, after two months of anti-French demonstrations in Niger, President Macron announced that France would withdraw its ambassador and its troops from the country. Many experts considered this a serious blow to France's prestige. According to Al Jazeera, France's withdrawal from Niger is "undoubtedly a victory" for the country's new rulers and "a disgrace for France".

The Nigerian Vanguard Newspaper, describing the unsavory role of the French president in resolving this conflict, notes that in this situation, being a statesman, he has sunk to the level of a petty swindler who distorts the true essence of the real events. Thus, after a two-month standoff, President Macron, having previously ordered his ambassador in Niamey not to leave his residence, despite the ultimatum to leave the country within 48 hours, accused the military rulers of holding his ambassador and his embassy staff hostages to the military regime. President Macron's statement that his decision to

withdraw French troops from Niger was motivated by the alleged reluctance on the part of the Nigerian troops to continue the fight against terrorism is also beneath all criticism.

However, the British weekly *The Economist* states that the real reason for this move by Macron is Paris's understanding that despite all the threats from ECOWAS against Niger, these community countries will not be able to launch a military operation against the military regime in this country due to disagreements among its members and that it has no chance of restoring his former protégé Mohamed Bazoum to power. The Nigerian newspaper *The Nation* agrees with the British weekly and emphasizes that neither Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, who is the head of ECOWAS, nor the community itself can do anything to resolve this crisis in the near future, since it is based on the serious economic problems of these states that cannot be "resolved overnight due to the plunderous activities perpetuated by the French metropolis for more than a hundred years". Therefore, according to Dr. François Heisbourg, (Foundation for Strategic Research, Paris) France, relying on the weakness of Niamey's position, has largely bluffed its relations with the local military over the past two months rather than seeking mutually acceptable solutions.

The Saudi newspaper *Asharq al-Awsat*, assessed the vicissitudes of the Niger-French confrontation associated with the demands of the Nigerian military authorities to withdraw the French military contingent and the French ambassador, and also the refusal of France to do so, due to non-recognition of the "legitimacy" of the military leaders, sees in Paris's actions "lack of logic and a complete loss of sense of reality," which could ultimately lead to new military coups in former French possessions, strengthen the position of terrorists on the continent and increase African migration to Europe, which will ultimately harm the interests of France itself.

The neocolonial nature of France's policy in Africa is criticized not only outside its borders. Increasingly, its effectiveness is being questioned in the French media and research centers. For example, France 24 arrived at a conclusion, rather gloomy for French people, which sounds like a funeral prayer for Paris's policy in Africa, admitting that Macron's policy had brought the country to a state where its former colonies, expressing their dissatisfaction with the French military presence, kicked Paris out. After the Central African Republic, Mali and Burkina Faso, Paris "received this honour" in Niger.

The European Union Institute for Security Studies believes that this kind of failure occurred due to Paris's uncontrollable desire to play a leading role in the Sahel zone without taking into account the changes taking place in the region associated with the growth of anti-French sentiment, as well as due to excessive paternalism and open interference in the affairs of African states.

Moreover, according to The New York Times, these failures of Paris policy in Africa, which is “tired of the ignorance and arrogance of President Emmanuel Macron,” are leading to increased Russian influence on the continent.

The Middle East Monitor, published in London and financed by Qatar, notes that the current situation in Niger is another convincing evidence of the African population’s rejection of the French colonial legacy. Africans, especially young people who make up the vast majority of the population across the continent, with an average age of 14.8 in Niger, have become increasingly critical of French policies. This concerns the generation of Africans who were born after their countries gained independence and did not experience all the “charm” of French colonization, but today they suffer from the continued plundering of their countries’ natural resources.

Amid growing dissatisfaction among Africans with Western policies, ECOWAS Parliament Speaker Sidi Tunis told the Nigerian newspaper Premium Times that “in our quest for democracy, we (ECOWAS) must reconsider our relations with the West, especially between the French-speaking countries and France”. According to him, the coup in Niger highlighted in stark detail the problem of neocolonialism in Africa, when the country’s mineral wealth is mercilessly exploited while its population barely makes ends meet.

Poverty is indeed one of the most pressing problems in modern Niger. More than 40 percent of its twenty-five million population, roughly 10 million people, live below the poverty line with an income of less than \$1.90 a day. About 50 percent of school-age children have difficulties in gaining access to education due to the lack of schools or the inability to attend them due to the jihadist threat in many parts of the country. And this is even though Niger, in addition to copper, niobium, lithium, manganese, cobalt, and nickel, has the world’s largest uranium deposits, which have been developed by the French company Orano (formerly Arewa) over the past 50 years, receiving huge profits due to the low-income tax of the host country. However, the share of uranium in Niger’s GDP is only 5 percent. As for the country’s budget, 40 percent of it is financed by foreign aid in the amount of \$2.2 billion per year. Therefore, apparently, the African online publication The Elephant, assessing the existing system of French-African relations, qualifies the coup in Niger as an indictment of French neocolonialism.

In the language of the American publication POLITICO, “the expulsion of France from Niger” showed the need for Paris to urgently review its relations with African countries, primarily by reducing its military presence on the continent as a whole, which, according to experts from Queen Mary University of London, “has begun to have a counterproductive effect, and if Paris wants

to preserve it, it must be integrated into the EU structures, which will enable France to free itself from the label of the gendarme of Africa.”

According to the American source, this solution is also supported by the French Foreign Ministry, where, in contrast to the presidential leadership, they have concluded that “our military presence is no longer accepted in African countries”. According to one diplomat: “We have been kicked out of several African countries, and we do not need to wait to be shown the door in other African states”.

However, it should be understood that there are currently 6,700 French troops still stationed in Africa, particularly in Chad, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire and Gabon. But according to Kenyan newspaper The East African, anti-French sentiment is also on the rise in these countries. In Senegal, for example, Ousmane Sonko, the opposition contender in next February’s presidential elections, has made criticism of France’s neocolonial policy a central part of his campaign platform, which is particularly supported by young people. The British weekly The Economist, citing public opinion polls, regarding France’s reputation in Côte d’Ivoire and the stronghold of French influence in Africa, notes that less than half of Ivorians trust the former colonial power. 65 percent of them believe that France can win them over if it withdraws all its troops from West Africa.

Despite the fact that Paris suffered a diplomatic setback in the confrontation with Niamey, we should not think that it will so easily accept the role of the victim and will not seek revenge. In this regard, President Macron’s statement at the annual French ambassador’s meeting held at the end of August in Paris particularly attracts attention, in which he promised to take measures to “defend democracy” in Niger. But he did not say what exactly he intended to do. He apparently adopted this manner from President Joe Biden, who once grinned and declared that Nord Stream 2 would never take place. And there are grounds for this kind of reasoning. As recently as September 26, according to Reuters, a coup attempt was foiled in Burkina Faso. Several army officers and civilians were arrested. Earlier it was reported that the authorities expelled the military attaché of the French embassy, Emmanuel Pasquier, from the country on suspicion of subversive activities.

It is possible that the attempt at a new coup in Niger may be postponed to a later date, since with the current intensity of anti-French sentiment, this could cause an uncontrollable wave of anger in response to the actions taken by Paris with unpredictable consequences throughout Africa. But after some time, it will be easier for the French intelligence services to justify the next coup by internal squabbles in military circles, which, unfortunately, is very common in Africa.

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G5 Sahel Collapse



France has suffered another geopolitical setback in Africa. On December 2, Burkina Faso and Niger announced their withdrawal from all G5 Sahel bodies, an institutional framework initiated by the leaders of Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad in 2014 and finally formed in 2017. On December 6, the Presidents of Mauritania and Chad also announced their withdrawal from the organization.

Among the reasons for withdrawing from the alliance cited by the military leaders of the first two countries was the organization's inability to effectively solve not only economic but also military tasks assigned to it, and their "vision of independence is not compatible with G5 participation in its current form."

This alliance, consisting of the least developed African countries, but possessing huge reserves of strategic minerals necessary for the development of modern economies, was aimed at creating more favorable conditions for their economic growth by ensuring their security from threats posed by numerous terrorist organizations and criminal syndicates proliferated in this region after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya.

The power vacuum created in vast areas outside the major agglomerations in the Sahel zone has spurred a phenomenal growth of extremist violence in the past decade, triggering an acute humanitarian crisis: 4.9 million people have been displaced and 24 million people require food assistance, according to UN. In one of his speeches, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres had to admit that “we are losing the war on terror in the Sahel zone, so we should strengthen the fight against them.”

However, according to the latest data, the situation in large parts of the region remains very difficult, as noted in the May report of the UN Security Council. Terrorist organizations have increasingly threatened the security of coastal West African countries such as Benin, Ghana, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire.

And all this happened despite the fact that since 2014, France has been fighting jihadists here as part of the widely publicized counter-terrorism Operation Barkhane. According to the American edition of Truthout, Paris, when starting this military campaign, secretly planned to use the idea of fighting jihadism while maintaining and asserting its presence in Africa, protecting it from the encroachments of rival powers, and, hoping for the so-called “Atlantic solidarity”, counted on broad financial and military support from its European allies and the United States, but miscalculated.

Paris’s allies saw the creation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force as France’s desire to shift to them its financial burden associated with supporting its African partners and maintaining its leading position in Africa under the guise of fighting international terrorism. The head of the Association for the Sovereignty of Peoples of Mali, Abdoulaye Nabaloum, said that this regional alliance was France’s instrument to better control the countries in this region.

This view is upheld by former United States Ambassador to Africa John Campbell, who believes that “the godfather of the organization is French President Emmanuel Macron,” and the main financial sponsors at the time of its creation were Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which allocated \$100 and 30 million, respectively, to fight jihadism, which poses a direct threat to their dynastic system of governance.

The fact that France created the G5 Sahel Joint Force is expressly stated in the UN May report on the situation in the Sahel zone.

When the Elysee Palace realized, but did not officially acknowledge, its inability to independently deal with terrorism in the region in early 2020, coupled with its failed plans to create, at the expense of others, an effective military coalition of African and European countries, Macron in June 2021 made a statement bordering on blackmail about its intention to reduce its military presence, citing

the fact that “France has neither the obligation nor the desire to keep its troops in the Sahel zone forever.”

This blackmail was directed not only against the G5 Sahel, primarily Mali, on whose territory French troops were located, but also affected US and European interests.

Attempts by Paris to get Washington and Europe to play a more active role in military operations in this African area did not bring results. During talks in January 2020 in Washington with US Defense Secretary Mark Esper, French Defense Minister Florence Parly asked the latter not to reduce the US military presence in the Sahel zone in connection with the turn of US policy towards the Indo-Pacific region, but he did not give any concrete assurances, citing that these issues are under consideration.

In this regard, an article in the American edition of *Responsible Statecraft* is noteworthy, which describes the military failures of the French troops, acknowledges that the Sahel is plunging deeper into chaos, and recommends in no case to take the place of Europeans in resolving this crisis.

Disillusioned with the Parisian inability to make a radical change in the course of counter-terrorism military operations, the military authorities of Mali, on whose territory French troops have been waging a losing war against terrorists since 2013, signed a contract for security assistance with the Russian Wagner PMC, which immediately caused a negative reaction from Paris, which announced its withdrawal of troops from Mali within 6 months. Bamako, in turn, asked Paris to do this immediately and, in addition, in May announced the denunciation of the defense treaty with France.

Moreover, on May 15, 2022, the Malian authorities announced its withdrawal from the G5 Sahel, since this alliance was exploited by its individual members and one “extra-regional country,” referring to France, in their own interests, incompatible with its goals.

In an interview with the French newspaper *Le Croix* in May 2022, before the July 2023 coup, Niger President Mohamed Bazoum said that Mali’s withdrawal from the G5 Sahel would mark its end.

The immediate reason for Bamako’s decision was the refusal of Niger and Chad, as members of this G5 before the military coups that occurred in these countries in June and August, respectively, to allow Mali to assume the G5 Sahel rotating presidency.

Another no less important reason for this decision was the introduction of economic and other sanctions against the military regime for its refusal to return

to civilian rule after the expiration of the transition period, as well as for establishing ties with the Russian Wagner PMC.

The subsequent establishment on September 16, 2023 of the Alliance of Sahel States consisting of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger in order to coordinate efforts to strengthen the “architecture” of joint defense and mutual support was a kind of prologue to the collapse of the G5. According to Mali’s Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop, the fight against terrorism in all three countries will be a priority in the new organization’s activities.

The agreement states that any attack on the sovereignty or territorial integrity of one or more parties to the alliance will be regarded as aggression against other parties and will require the help of all parties, including the use of military force. In this regard, Algerian political scientist Ahmed Mizab regarded the creation of the alliance as the end of French hegemony’s era in the region.

According to many experts, the establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States was the logical outcome of the neo-colonial policy of Paris, which is based on unceremonious interference in the affairs of its African partners, the decades-long theft of natural resources, and its inability to put an end to terrorist activity in the region.

Years of accumulated dissatisfaction with the French military presence and the paternalistic nature of Paris’s foreign policy eventually culminated in an explosive wave of anti-French sentiment not only in public circles in African countries, but also among the military, which led to a series of military coups.

The Middle East Eye noted that anti-French sentiment, for example, in Mali became so acute that part of the population, after ten years of unsuccessful struggle by French troops on its territory, began to see France not so much as a liberating force, but as an occupying force.

No less acute is the situation in Niger, which until recently was considered a stronghold of French influence on the continent. It came to the point that during a protest in front of the base hosting French military forces in Niamey, attended by a New York Times reporter, demonstrators carried a coffin they said was meant for the French president and brandished signs reading “Death to France”.

The completely ill-considered, sometimes reckless statements made by officials of the Elysee Palace about the possible use of armed force in the event of a threat to French interests were perceived extremely negatively in African circles. Thus, the British The Guardian, covering the military coup in Niger in July, noted that Emmanuel Macron threatened that “he will not tolerate any attack against France and its interests” and if anyone gets hurt, Paris will retaliate “immediately and uncompromisingly.”

The author of the article qualified this reaction of the French President as “a stern warning from the almighty emperor to the uncontrollable natives who had escaped his control,” for whom even the idea of France as the “gendarme of Africa,” established in many African countries, ceased to have any meaning.

This is why, according to Truthout, the signing of the agreement for the establishment of the Alliance of Sahelian States was a direct result of threats from Macron and his regional allies in the ranks of the Economic Community of West African States to undertake armed intervention in Niger in order to overthrow the new military authorities, which eventually forced them to join the new alliance.

According to the American Huffington Post, the current failures of Macron’s African policy in the Sahel zone, accompanied by an unprecedented increase in anti-French sentiment and half a dozen coups, were largely due to the rampant jihadist organizations in the region after the overthrow of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, provoked by French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

But today, according to one of the authors of Foreign Policy, this “Sarkozy’s adventure” comes back as a boomerang and takes its heaviest toll on the imperial ambitions of the Elysee Palace’s representatives, whose troops, unable to stop the growth of terrorist activity, are expelled in disgrace from the countries of this region, sometimes together with French ambassador.

In this context, the assessment of the current situation in the Sahel zone by experts from the American analytical center Stratfor is noteworthy, as it produces a disappointing conclusion for the Elysee Palace that “the West’s reluctance to wage a more active fight against jihadism in this region creates a unique opportunity for Russia” to advance its interests.

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Niger – USA: Another slap in the face for the arrogant hegemon. The American embarrassment in Niger



On 16 March this year, Niger’s military government announced the cancellation of its military cooperation agreement with the United States regarding the status of US Department of Defense personnel and civilians on Nigerian territory.

In a statement on national television, Amadou Abdramane, a spokesman for Niger’s military leadership, said the agreement was imposed on Niger in 2012 in violation of the “constitutional and democratic prerogatives” of a sovereign state and “no longer meets the interests and aspirations of the people of Niger”.

The statement came a day after the departure from the country of an American delegation, including the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Molly Phee, the head of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), General Michael Langley, and a group of other officials, who, in violation of all rules of diplomatic protocol, travelled to Niamey without having coordinated their visit with the Nigerian Foreign Ministry on the timing, composition of the delegation and the intended agenda.

The Americans' visit, scheduled for 12-13 March, was extended by one day in the hope of meeting the Head of State, General Abdourahamane Tchiani, in person. But this did not happen because of his refusal, the arrogant behaviour of the delegation members in meetings with his subordinates, and the rude interference in the affairs of a sovereign state.

According to US State Department officials, the purpose of the visit was to "continue discussions with the leaders of the country's ruling National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, which began last August, on the return of Niger to the path of democratic development and the prospects for partnership in the areas of security and economic development".

It should be recalled here that Washington began urging the new military leadership of Niger to take steps to transfer power to a civilian government immediately after the coup of 26 July 2023. US Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland's persistent advice to Niger last August to put the country back on the path of constitutional development and not to follow in Mali's footsteps in exchange for economic aid did not have any effect on the local military. She was also denied meetings with the country's new leader, General Abdourahamane Tchiani, and with ousted former President Mohamed Bazoum, who is under house arrest.

Pursuing a carrot-and-stick policy, three months after the coup, Washington announced that it was freezing \$200 million in funding to Niger to fight terrorism and train the local armed forces, as well as a number of economic programmes worth \$442 million. The US linked the resumption of these programmes to "the restoration of democratic rule in the country in a short and credible timeframe".

The country has also been removed from the list of countries eligible for duty-free exports to the US because of its "lack of progress in promoting political pluralism and the rule of law in public life".

When another woman from Washington arrived in Niamey on 12 March this year, the Nigerian military already had some idea of who they would be dealing with. Shortly before her visit to Niger, in an interview with the Washington Post in February this year, Molly Phee had stressed that US aid to Niger would be suspended until the military leaders set a timetable for restoring civilian rule in the country.

Niamey could not ignore statements by individual US generals regarding Africa's place in the US fight against international terrorism. For example, General James Jones, head of the US military's European Command, stressed at the time that "Africa's enormous potential makes the task of ensuring its stability an imperative of paramount importance".

And General Michael Langley, a member of the US delegation to the Niger negotiations, warned earlier this year that “if the US were to close its drone base, it would have serious negative consequences not only for Niger and the region, but also for the implementation of the US counter-terrorism strategy in Africa as a whole”.

It seems, therefore, that even before the US delegation’s visit, Niger’s military leaders may have felt that, to use General Jones’s language, the current “imperative of paramount importance” for Washington was to maintain a US military presence with its UAV airbases on their territory, which they expected to play on.

The US military presence in Niger began in 2013, when the US set up Base 101 at the international airport in the capital, Niamey, for UAVs to gather intelligence on jihadist movements and concentrations.

Another air base, known as Base 201, was then built between 2016 and 2019 in the central part of the country near the city of Agadez. Covering an area of 25 square kilometres, it is the second largest US military facility in Africa after Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. Located on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, it serves as an outpost of a network of US bases in North and West Africa to monitor the activities of terrorist organizations. Washington has invested some \$250 million in its construction, infrastructure development and maintenance. Its annual maintenance costs the US treasury \$30 million.

Remotely piloted MQ-9 Reaper drones and Boeing C-17 Globemaster III strategic transport aircraft are based only at the Agadez base, a thousand kilometers from Niamey.

In addition to these two bases, the New York Times reports that in 2018 the Americans set up another secret base on the Libyan border near the town of Dirkou, this time for the CIA to attack Islamist militants who have settled in southern Libya.

The number of American personnel in Niger, including military personnel, Pentagon civilians and their contractors, is around one thousand. And all of them are currently in a “suspended state”, as is the fate of the American military bases, because, unexpectedly for many observers, the negotiations in Niamey ended in a complete failure for the United States.

And this happened, according to the majority of representatives of the expert community, due to the fault of the American delegation, primarily Molly Phee, who, following Joe Biden’s installation, that Washington would “in every possible way counteract violations of democracy in Africa by creating

conditions for the organizers of coups that would be unacceptable to them,” during negotiations in a condescending manner, she questioned the expediency of developing ties with the Russian Federation and, as stated by The Wall Street Journal, accused the Niger authorities of preparing an agreement on the supply of uranium to Iran.

The unconstructive attitude of the US delegation has been directly pointed out by American political analysts. Commenting on the outcome of the talks, Cameron Hudson, Director of the Africa Division of the US National Security Council under the Bush Jr. administration, said in an interview with Fox News Digital that “the US image in the region has been dealt a sensitive blow...and it sends a clear message to us that African countries today have a choice...and they no longer need to listen to US lectures”.

And further. According to Hudson, the US administration publicly says that African countries are free to choose their partners, but then privately demands that they reconsider their choices. “It is this hypocrisy that has put us in a very uncomfortable position in Niger,” he stresses.

The American publication Responsible Statecraft also sees one of the reasons for the failure of this delegation’s visit in the excessive arrogance of the American leadership, which thought that the level of the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Molly Phee, with the authority to lecture him on the choice of partners without prior approval from Washington, was sufficient to negotiate with the head of an African state, as she demonstrated during the talks with the Prime Minister of Niger, Ali Lamine Zeine, the Minister of Defence, General Salifou Modi, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Niger, Mohamed Toumba.

The Turkish newspaper Daily Sabah, in an article entitled “The US is losing its influence in Africa due to political arrogance”, notes that the recent events in Niger are based on the dissatisfaction of African countries with the neo-colonial policies of the Western powers, which oppose their attempts to get rid of the West’s unilateral dependence and diversify their relations with the new world players that have arrived on the continent.

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Senegal: from prison cell to the presidency. The end of the "liberal democracy" regime?



In Senegal's presidential elections held on 24 March this year, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, 44, won a convincing victory for the opposition forces with 54 per cent of the vote. Former Prime Minister Amadou Ba of the ruling Alliance for the Republic coalition of outgoing President Macky Sall came in second with 35 per cent of his supporters.

These elections were preceded by a period of intense internal political struggle between Macky Sall's ruling "democratic regime" and the opposition, linked to the March 2021 arrest of Ousmane Sonko, leader of the African Patriots of Senegal for Work, Ethics and Fraternity (PASTEF) party, a member of parliament and third-place finisher in the 2019 presidential election with 16 per cent of the vote, on charges of defamation and insulting the Minister of Tourism.

The opposition saw his arrest as another attempt by President Macky Sall to eliminate a serious political rival for the 2024 presidential election and staged protests in many cities across the country. During the crackdown, dozens of protesters were killed, hundreds were injured and about 1,000 people were arrested.

Al-Jazeera's latest investigations into these events, conducted in conjunction with the Qatar-based Causa Foundation, reveal that the Senegalese

government, led by Amadou Ba, with close ties to Washington, used a special unit of the Senegalese police for this purpose.

As it turned out, the Rapid Reaction Group known as GAR-SI, formed and trained by Western specialists with EU money from among the Senegalese police to fight armed gangs, smuggling, human trafficking and other cross-border crimes on the Mali-Senegal border, was in fact also used to repress in Senegal the protests of the opposition party PASTEF led by Ousmane Sonko between 2021 and 2023. Amnesty International estimates that at least 60 people were victims of this repression.

Among the victims of this repression was President-elect Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who spent more than 11 months in detention over a Facebook post that was considered dangerous by the authorities to the sovereignty and security of the state.

Bassirou Diomaye Faye, a devout Muslim, obtained a master's degree in law from the University of Dakar after graduating from high school. In 2004, he enrolled in the National School of Public Administration, which trains senior government officials, and was appointed tax inspector after graduation. While working in the tax authorities, he met his future political mentor, Ousmane Sonko, who gained a reputation as a tough fighter against corruption in the tax system. He joined the PASTEF party, which he founded, and quickly became its second most important functionary after Ousmane Sonko.

One of the reasons for Diomaye Faye's arrest, according to experts of the Canadian Digital Journal, is the rapid growth of his popularity in the ranks of the PASTEF party. While serving as its secretary general, he proved to be a fairly successful party organizer, skillfully balancing the interests of various factions through a compromise approach, while at the same time developing party programme documents from a left-wing pan-Africanist perspective, in which the ruling Macky Sall saw a threat to the dominance of its liberal establishment.

On 3 February, the incumbent President, whose second term at the head of state ended on 2 April 2024, announced the postponement of elections scheduled for 25 February to 15 December 2024, which was seen by the opposition as an attempt to extend his stay in power.

This sparked a new wave of anti-government demonstrations. Opposition representatives in Parliament attempting to block the adoption of the bill to postpone the elections were arrested, and tear gas was fired by police against supporters gathered outside Parliament.

Ultimately, the Constitutional Council of Senegal declared the postponement of the elections an illegitimate act and, under widespread pressure from Macky

Sall, who had recently begun to lose the confidence of the population, had to schedule them for 24 March 2024.

Opinion polls show that during Macky Sall's rule, the number of respondents satisfied with the state of the level of democracy in the country has declined from 64 per cent in 2014 to 18 per cent in 2022, while the number of those dissatisfied with his authoritarian ways has increased from 19 per cent in 2017 to 57 per cent in 2022. At the same time, in 2021, more than half of Senegalese rated the French presence, or rather overreach, in their country as negative.

According to experts of the American publication Responsible Statecraft, the decline of Macky Sall's authority and his own undermining of the foundations of Senegalese democracy began after he began to force the justice system to imprison his political opponents on false charges, especially after the events of 2021.

As a consequence, and much to the surprise of many, the elections scheduled for 24 March brought to power a "non-system" politician who was released from prison on amnesty ten days before the elections. In this context, as The Economist notes, former Senegalese President Macky Sall, who had tried to unconstitutionally run for a third term, hailed the peaceful outcome of the vote as "a victory for Senegalese democracy".

This is coming from the President of a country long considered a bastion of democracy in Africa, who in April 2023, feeling threatened by his party's defeat in the upcoming elections, ordered the arrest of Diomaye Faye on charges of contempt of court and "undermining state security" following his social media posts criticizing the falsification of charges against PASTEF leader Ousmane Sonko.

Diomaye Faye's undisputed victory in the first round of voting was an unexpected surprise for all parties involved. First and foremost, it came as a shock to the ruling political elite, which, as Le Monde notes, he intends to put on the back burner, launch an uncompromising fight against corruption and protect the country's "sovereignty" by renegotiating contracts with oil companies and establishing "balanced and respectful" relations with France, while not ruling out security co-operation with Russia.

As The Economist notes, Senegal's new President has joined the club of those African figures who, amid growing popular discontent with the policies of "greying leaders and corrupt political elites", have taken on the burden of responsibility for governing Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. But unlike military leaders, he came to power not through a military coup but through the ballot box.

Welcoming the election of Diomaye Faye as President, Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traoré said Faye's mandate represents a symbol of a new era of a relaxed, free and sovereign Africa. He added, however, that he was ready to work together to "strengthen sub-regional and international co-operation".

The new leaders of Senegal and the military leaders of these countries represent a broad populist reaction to the instability in the region, poverty, chronic unemployment and growing anti-French sentiment caused by Paris failed neo-colonial policies, concludes an author from The Economist.

In this regard, Business Day, a South African newspaper, emphasises that "the victory in the presidential election in Senegal of an opposition candidate who opposes excessive Western influence and prioritizes national interests is a major breakthrough towards independent development, not only for the region but for the African continent as a whole".

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Senegal: from prison cell to the presidency. What's next? The West on standby

In the area of foreign policy, the most serious step the new head of state plans to take is to reassess relations with the former metropolis. According to the South African Mail and Guardian, both the President and the Prime Minister are unanimous in agreeing that the partnership with France needs to be significantly adjusted to take Senegal's interests more fully into account.

Paris has been closely following the situation in Senegal since the new President came to power. According to reports from the Élysée Palace, President Macron called President Faye on 29 March to congratulate him "warmly" on his election victory and, during a half-hour conversation that was "a very positive discussion", stressed that France wished to "continue and intensify" bilateral ties.

For his part, the Senegalese President reiterated that Senegal would remain a "loyal ally", recognizing the partnership with Paris as "necessary" but which would need to be adjusted.

Pointing to France's particular interest in maintaining ties with Senegal at the same level, Le Monde notes that even before the official announcement of Diomaye Faye's victory, the day after the election on 25 March, President Macron congratulated him on his victory in his X (Twitter), not only in French but also in Wolof, the most widely spoken language in Senegal, stressing that he was "looking forward to working with him".

In a recent interview with Radio France-Info, Faye said that the Senegalese would like this cooperation to be more fruitful for them than it is now. According to him, "we have been talking about this for a long time, but unfortunately we have not been listened to".

At the same time, given the "left-wing rhetoric" of Senegal's new leaders, as well as its economic dependence (France remains the country's largest investor), the Élysée Palace is in no hurry to make official assessments of the processes taking place in the country, adopting a general wait-and-see attitude.

In this context, it is interesting to note a comment made by a former representative of the French Development Agency in Senegal, whose mission is to combat poverty and promote sustainable development, in which he stressed that "it is easy to make speeches about the sovereignty of a country,

but it is quite another thing to govern it and to take measures against the French presence in that country when it is against one's interests".

It should be borne in mind that, in order to maintain their political support, the new leaders of the country must not only fulfil the social commitments they have made to young people and the population in general, but also take into account the interests of the section of civil society and entrepreneurs who voted for them in the elections.

Therefore, based on the balance of interests of all parties, Ousmane Sonko said that the creation of their own national currency would have to wait. In his opinion, this issue should be studied at the sub-regional level first and, based on its results, a final decision should be made.

As for the revision of Franco-Senegalese relations, according to Voice of America experts, it may be initiated by Paris itself, which has recently been rethinking its military presence in West Africa. According to Le Monde, in accordance with the decision taken by Emmanuel Macron in January this year to reduce its military presence in Gabon, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, Paris can leave only 100 soldiers in the capitals of these states on a permanent basis. As for Dakar, where the French air force base is located, the reduction could affect some 250 troops.

Meanwhile, pursuant to a contract signed in 2019 between the Senegalese Ministry of Defence and the French shipbuilding company Piriou, a ceremony was held in France on 16 April to hand over to the Senegalese Navy, in addition to two previously delivered patrol vessels, a 62-metre-long, multi-purpose third patrol vessel equipped with anti-ship missiles with a range of more than 30 kilometers.

The change of power in Senegal was not only another sensitive blow to French positions in Africa, but also affected the interests of the United States, which for a long time considered this country as a "bastion of democracy" and a reliable military ally in the region.

It is not by chance, therefore, that the annual US development aid to Senegal amounts to 238 million dollars, not counting the financial resources for the implementation in this country of numerous programmes to promote the postulates of "liberal democracy".

Therefore, on the second day after the elections on 25 March, the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, in a conversation with Diomaye Faye, stressed "the great interest of the United States in deepening relations between the two countries".

It should be noted here that as early as the beginning of the year, Senegal's constitutional crisis in the country, triggered by President Macky Sall's attempt to postpone elections until the end of the year, caused serious alarm in Washington. The American Institute for the Study of War and Critical Threats saw the developments in the country, which were out of Macky Sall's control, as a serious threat to the country's development along the lines of "liberal democracy". This, in turn, according to the institute's experts, could lead to a further weakening of the US position in the region and a strengthening of Russia's influence.

And the U.S. does have a lot to lose in this country. Senegal, which has historically earned a reputation as a gateway to Africa as a convenient transit point for trade and a springboard for military deployments on the African continent, has long turned into one of the main US allies on the continent, including in the military field.

Under a 2016 military agreement between the two countries, the Pentagon was authorized to deploy US troops to the country in the event of a terrorist threat or humanitarian crisis. In addition, the US Africa Command regularly conducts joint training operations with the Senegalese armed forces and is engaged in military training.

Recent developments in Senegal, associated with the arrival of Ousmane Sonko and Diomaye Faye, have raised serious concerns about the prospects for further development of relations in Western European countries as well.

If we take into account that Senegal has previously played a major role in imposing a blockade on landlocked Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, its possible rapprochement with these countries and its intention to leave the CFA franc currency zone and move closer to Russia and other countries of the Global South, this, as The Intel Drop notes, will be another major foreign policy defeat not only for Paris, but also for Western countries as a whole.

It was no coincidence, therefore, that the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, rushed to Senegal for talks with the new President. Receiving him in Dakar on 23 April, Diomaye Faye, while acknowledging the cooperation with the EU as "close and multifaceted", pointed to the need to "rethink it together in the light of the new global environment".

On the EU, during the election campaign, Diomaye Faye promised to renegotiate the Senegal-EU fisheries agreement. Touching on this and other issues, Charles Michel remarked that both sides "should not shy away" from discussing difficult issues, especially when there are opportunities for solutions.

But in general, most Western countries have so far adopted a neutral stance towards the new authorities in Senegal, waiting to see what further steps they might take to achieve their declared goals and slogans.

As for the international implications of the election of Senegalese President Diomaye Faye, a left-wing pan-Africanist, as a South African political scientist notes on Bloomberg, it is evidence of a new stage in the struggle of African states for genuine economic independence from former metropolises, not only through military coups, but also through the expression in elections of the will of the majority of the population of their aspirations and aspirations, which is the main victim of the continuing plunder of Africa's natural resources by the former colonies.

But at the moment, these are only hypothetical speculations of the South African expert on possible options for the development of the situation in the region. To what extent they will be implemented directly in Senegal will show the events of the near future, the development of which will be determined by the balance of internal political forces in the country and the consistency of the new leaders in fulfilling their commitments.

In any case, the elections in Senegal have shown that the emphasis of PASTEF leaders on restoring "national sovereignty" over key sectors of the economy - oil and gas, mining and fishing - by renegotiating contracts with foreign companies has received strong support from the population demanding an end to the neo-colonial exploitation of the natural wealth of African countries.

At the same time, as Bloomberg notes, the Russia-Africa summit in St Petersburg last July, where Ibrahim Traoré, the 36-year-old military leader of Burkina Faso, gave a speech that won support across Africa, played a major role in Africa's realization of the need to pursue genuine state sovereignty, saying: "We are among the forgotten peoples of the world... And we are here to talk about the future of our countries, and how things will be tomorrow in the world we are striving to build, in which there will be no interference in our internal affairs".

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“The Sahel troika” leaves ECOWAS: How will the new round of tensions in West Africa affect Moscow’s interests?



The number of significant political events across the African continent has increased dramatically recently: not even a month after the signing of the sensational Memorandum of Understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland, another news story has already taken centre stage. Thus, on 28 January, the military Governments of three Sahel States – Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger – announced their decision to leave the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with immediate effect. It should be borne in mind that any political changes in the Sahel zone may be of fundamental importance for Russia’s interests as the latter seeks to continue deepening military and economic co-operation with the states of the region, since it is in Mali and Burkina Faso that Russian influence has recently increased more than ever before. Thus, understanding the current transformations and prospects for further development of the situation is one of the central elements in building Moscow’s foreign policy strategy in the region. In this article, we will examine possible projections of the decisions of the leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger on Russia’s interests in West Africa.

Prerequisites: a brief overview

The year of creation of ECOWAS, an organization born out of the spread of pan-African cooperation and regional integration, is considered to be 1975, when the founding States signed the founding Lagos Treaty, slightly amended in 1993 under the Cotonou Agreements. In general, from the outset, ECOWAS was conceived as an organization designed to promote the economic development of the region, including the gradual transition to economic union; political and military objectives do not appear in the Community's list of goals, nor in the list of objectives to this day (Art. 3). However, in 1993, the text of the Lagos Treaty was amended, including Article 4 on the fundamental principles of the organization, which, among other things, referred to the maintenance of regional peace, stability and security and the need for non-conflict coexistence among member states.

The events that heralded the current ECOWAS rift can be traced back to August 2020, when Mali's military arrested President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. In response, the African Union and ECOWAS suspended the country's membership, and the leaders of the latter insisted on imposing tough sanctions on Mali. Later, similar events, accompanied by a similar ECOWAS response, took place in Burkina Faso (September 2022) and Niger (July 2023). As a result, the succession of military coups and ECOWAS's extremely harsh policies towards the Sahelian Troika have had a number of important consequences: 1) The severe economic and humanitarian consequences, as well as the illegality of some of the sanctions imposed, have created a hostile sentiment towards ECOWAS among the elites and the general public in the Sahelian states; 2) The threat of military force against the coup plotters in Niger by ECOWAS (mainly represented by Nigeria) has contributed to the creation of a Triple Alliance of Sahelian states to counter threats from both armed groups and neighbors; 3) Increased demand for security services has fueled the intensification of military-industrial trade and military co-operation between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, on the one hand, and Russia as a "security exporter", on the other; 4) Finally, against the background of rapprochement with Moscow and the West's general support for ECOWAS policies, the long-standing discontent with the actions of Paris and other First World countries as such has gradually evolved in the Sahel countries into a more or less formalised agenda based on the rejection of neocolonialism.

A split in ECOWAS: What should Moscow expect?

Although the ECOWAS spokesperson stated that the decision of the Sahel troika governments is currently only an intention that has not been legally formalized but publicly announced, the split within the organization is already an established fact. As noted earlier, for Russia, which has considerable influence in Mali and Burkina Faso and is likely to expand its presence in the region by deepening ties with Niger, the conflict between the Sahel troika and ECOWAS is an element of the political context that would be reckless to ignore. In fact, in the context of the Bamako, Ouagadougou and Niamey démarche, a whole palette of more or less likely scenarios emerges, ranging from non-conflict coexistence between the two organisations to a direct confrontation between ECOWAS and the “defaulters”.

Leaving the analysis of the long-term consequences of the decision of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to be studied in detail in a separate article, it seems possible to make a few remarks and forecasts characterizing the most probable, in the author’s opinion, scenario.

So, first of all, it is necessary to understand that the withdrawal of the “Sahel troika” from ECOWAS de facto took place during 2020-2023 following the imposition of sanctions and suspension of membership in response to military coups, and the creation of the Triple Alliance of Sahel states a few months ago marked the confrontational nature of relations between the two associations. Thus, today we are witnessing a formalization of the previously established state of affairs, albeit accompanied by a natural “visualization” of fault lines. It is logical to assume that in the absence of qualitative changes in the positions of the parties, an escalation of the conflict is extremely unlikely: having not decided to conduct a military operation in the summer of 2023, ECOWAS, moreover, will not take such a radical and risky step now, since the military governments have only consolidated their positions over the past time.

Secondly, from the point of view of Russia’s interests in the region, the next, in fact final, step towards breaking up, at least for a while, the Sahel troika with ECOWAS does not imply significant threats. Russia’s relations with Mali, and subsequently with Burkina Faso and Niger, were bilateral from the very beginning and were not based on building co-operation with ECOWAS, which undoubtedly remains Moscow’s partner, like many other regional associations on the African continent. However, it is the ties established with Bamako and Ouagadougou that are of strategic importance for the Russian side. By acting primarily as a “security provider” Russia does not lose out in a situation where the governments of the “Sahel troika” countries have to rely on their own forces: the demand for Russian support will only increase.

Finally, speaking about the prospects of maintaining good relations between Russia and ECOWAS, it should be taken into account that for the Nigerian government, which is the informal leader of the organisation, Moscow's increasing influence, including through the expansion of its military presence, is a challenge that Abuja, however, has to put up with. At the same time, it would be premature to talk about a sharp increase in tensions between Russia and the Community: the dependence of a number of states on Russian grain supplies, internal problems, and the low level of foreign policy activity of a number of member states all limit the space for political conflict.

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Development of Transport Corridors in Africa: Perspectives of the Trans-African Motorways



Transport corridors remain a major obstacle to the dynamic and integrated economic development of individual States and entire regional communities on the African continent, as the quality and quantity of roads and railways do not fully meet existing needs. Some of the factors contributing to the low level of transport infrastructure development in Africa compared to the global average include:

- 1) colonial past – the construction of transport corridors was carried out by Europeans in fact exclusively for the purpose of exporting natural resources and, thus, was not accompanied by the emergence of interconnected transport networks;
- 2) material constraints, including a severe shortage of money to finance infrastructure projects and technological difficulties;
- 3) environmental conditions, which include both geographical and security challenges. At the same time, there are a number of ambitious projects in Africa to create long international transport corridors. This article focuses on one such project.

The processes of decolonisation in Africa that rapidly unfolded in the 1960s and 1970s were accompanied by the spread of pan-African ideas and the emergence of numerous projects designed to overcome economic backwardness and provide conditions for integration, both regional and transcontinental. As a result, as early as 1970, with the support of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Trans-African Motorways initiative was formulated, a grand plan to create 9 road transport corridors totalling 56683 kilometres. Over the following decades, the African Union, the African Development Bank and numerous regional economic communities have been actively involved in financing, implementation and monitoring.

Thus, the proposed initiative envisaged, albeit without a fixed timeframe, the construction of 9 motorways, including both the use of existing road sections and the construction of new ones. Thus, the motorway network was to look as follows: 1) The Cairo-Dakar Motorway, over 8,600 kilometres long, runs mainly along the coast and connects existing roads rather than building new ones; 2) The Algiers-Lagos Motorway, over 4,500 kilometres long, was conceived in 1962 not only to link the Mediterranean coast and the Gulf of Guinea, but also to promote the economic development of the interior of Algeria and Niger; 3) The Tripoli-Windhoek trunk line is the longest corridor (9,600 km), much of which runs through the “disadvantaged” and sparsely populated territories of Libya, Chad, CAR, Congo and DRC, which reduces the economic importance of this transport artery; 4) Cairo-Gaborone Motorway – another “north-south” route, though playing a greater role than the previous one, the planned length of which was 8,861 kilometres with the possibility of extending it to 10,228 kilometres through the Gaborone-Cape Town section; 5) The Dakar-Ndjamena Highway is a relatively short route of 4,490 km between 4 capitals (Senegal, Mali, Niger and Chad); 6) The N’Djamena-Djibouti Highway is a 4,219 km road linking Chad and the interior of Sudan and Ethiopia with the port of Djibouti; 7) The Dakar-Lagos Highway is a link of just over 4,000 km between the capitals of 11 West African coastal states; 8) The 6259 km long Lagos-Mombasa Highway, designed to become a transport artery between the largest ports of West and East Africa, runs through the heart of the continent; 9) The Beira-Lobito Highway, the shortest (3523 km) of the Trans-African Highways, links the hinterland of the DRC, Zambia and Zimbabwe with the port infrastructure of Angola and Mozambique.

At the same time, the complex impact of the previously discussed problems of transport infrastructure development led to the fact that as of 2003 – more than 30 years after the initiative was approved – the degree of highways’ readiness left much to be desired. For example, in some cases (Trans-African Motorways 3, 6, 8), asphalt pavement covered no more than 60 per cent of the total length of the route, and some sections were virtually absent from the road map

(“missing links”). In addition, even where the condition of the road surface allowed for the movement of cars and trucks, criminal, terrorist and insurgent groups controlling one or another inland area of the mainland were a significant obstacle to the free operation of the transport corridor.

At the same time, despite the lack of more up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of the Trans-African Motorways, it seems possible to note that even today such barriers as the actions of non-state actors and the weakness of the material and technical base remain the most fundamental problems on the way to realising the grandiose idea of the 1970s. For example, in the interior of the mainland – in the countries of the Sahel, CAR, DRC, and Congo – the critical weakness of state institutions makes progressive implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects almost impossible. It should be borne in mind that coordination of efforts to build and maintain the Trans-African Motorways is also difficult due to the overlapping areas of responsibility and interests of different regional economic communities. In contrast, less ambitious but more economically viable and cost-effective international transport corridor projects have recently been gaining popularity in all sub-regions of Africa, attracting both investment from TNCs and leading global players, including China.

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Russia and Eritrea: a new ally or a fellow traveler?



Until recently, for both the Russian public and the Russian expert community, Eritrea, a small country in the Horn of Africa, was one of the least known states in the world, and its mention in the media was in itself seen as a remarkable event. However, since March 2022, there has been an unprecedented increase in bilateral contacts between Moscow and Asmara. The two countries have exchanged three high-level diplomatic and ministerial visits in the past year and a half, including a visit to Moscow by Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh in April 2022, and a return visit to Asmara by his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov in January 2023. Moreover, at the end of May 2023, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki arrived in Moscow for the first time in his 30-year rule, and the Kremlin hosted talks between the two leaders. This striking transformation in relations between Russia and Eritrea needs to be examined in detail in order to determine whether the current trend towards rapprochement is a reflection of the two countries' strategic interest in establishing a long-term alliance, or whether it should be seen merely as a recognition that their current agendas just happen to coincide.

Eritrea: the odd man out in a unipolar world

A former colony of Italy, Eritrea was incorporated into the federalized state of Ethiopia in 1952 in accordance with a UN decision. Ten years later, the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie I abolished the federal system, which led to the beginning of Eritrea's struggle for independence. After the fall of the Ethiopian empire in 1974, there was a period of intense armed resistance to the socialist Derg junta, which was finally defeated in a civil war in 1991. Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia was only officially proclaimed by referendum in 1993, making it one of the youngest members of the international community. However, Eritrea was soon embroiled in a series of military conflicts, which have largely determined the course of its foreign policy.

In 1995, Eritrea occupied Yemen's Hanish Islands, in the Red Sea, but in 1996 Isaias Afwerki's government handed over most of the seized territory back to Yemen in accordance with a decision of a tribunal appointed by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, thus demonstrating Eritrea's commitment to upholding international law. However, the gradual integration of the new, independent Eritrea into the established system of international relations was essentially interrupted by its war with Ethiopia, which reached its height between 1998 and 2000. This conflict, better known as the Border War, had its roots in long-standing ideological tensions dating back to the joint struggle by Eritrean and Tigray rebels against the Derg regime.[1] The final catalyst of the war was the two countries' territorial disputes over the town of Badme.

Under the Algiers Accords, brokered by the African Union following the Ethiopian army's successes in December 2020, a special Boundary Commission was established. After two years, the Commission ruled that the disputed area, including the town of Badme, was Eritrean territory. The Ethiopian government's refusal to comply with the Commission's ruling, and the unwillingness of the major world powers, including the US, to intervene precipitated a radical change in Eritrea's conduct in relation to the international community. Disillusioned with the failure of international organizations and the West to support the just resolution of conflicts, the Government of Eritrea has ceased to act with the international community in mind, an approach reflected in both a hardening of its domestic policy and a radicalization of its foreign policy. Over the past 20 years, Eritrea's status as "international delinquent" has become firmly entrenched. Asmara's direct and indirect involvement in conflicts in Djibouti, Somalia and Ethiopia, its restrictions on the media and the opposition, the sanctions and, finally, the Eritrean government's stubborn unwillingness to respect "decency" (at least as this term is defined by liberal

democracies, and used in their official discourse) have combined to effectively isolate this East African country and plunge it into international limbo.

In broad terms, Eritrea's foreign policy from the early 2000s to date has been dominated by three main features: 1) A high level of autonomy in decision-making; 2) A refusal to maintain a semblance of friendliness in its relations with Western countries; 3) Active involvement in the Horn of Africa region, including participation in a number of armed conflicts.

Russia and Eritrea: what do they have in common?

At present, the main area where Russia's and Eritrea's views coincide is in relation to the UN discussions concerning the conflict in Ukraine. The UN General Assembly has held 5 votes related in some way or other to this issue since February 24, 2022. Eritrea supported Russia's position on all 4 occasions when its representative was present for the voting. Nevertheless, the fact that Russia and Eritrea express similar positions within the UN is not, in itself, sufficient justification for strategic or tactical cooperation between the two countries.

Thus, any analysis of the similarities and differences between Russia's and Eritrea's long-term goals should begin with the question: do such goals actually exist? While it may at first sight appear absurd, this question is actually very relevant at a time of increasing uncertainty in world politics and the great difficulties involved in developing practical strategies. Clearly, both Russia and Eritrea are, at the very least, concerned to protect their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and, in relation to this goal, one guarantee of success would be provided by preventing any further strengthening of the United States' status as the world's sole center of political power. However, this formulation of a long-term goal is too broad to explain why the two countries should cooperate.

To descend from general principles to specifics, we should define a number of specific areas in which the development of an alliance between Russia and Eritrea is most likely to bear fruit: 1) Military cooperation (military-industrial complex, military bases); 2) Cooperation on mining projects (potash, gold, Eritrea's natural gas deposits). Nevertheless, the extent of economic cooperation between the two countries is still significantly restricted by material

factors. For example, the state of Eritrea's infrastructure, much of which was destroyed in 1998-2000, is a serious problem, but in the current economic climate Russia is scarcely in a position to implement such large-scale projects. It is also important to note that mutual support in international organizations is rather symbolic in nature, and does not affect the existing balance of power between nations.

Moving together, step by step

In view of the uncertainty prevailing in international relations, and the emergence of new challenges and threats, it is impossible for any attempt at a long-term forecast to take into account all the factors that may arise as a result of changing circumstances. It is therefore scarcely possible to formulate practically oriented strategies, and the setting of shared goals tends to be a declarative and ideological step, and thus cannot be seriously considered as a basis for building an alliance. In such circumstances, it is best to prioritize cooperation on practical matters, in particular on military matters and in the field of mining. These areas of activity are suitable for the effective implementation of joint projects, and would undoubtedly play an important role in ensuring Eritrea's national security as a new ally of the Russian Federation.

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