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CONTENTS

THEORY, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF POLICY

- Irkhin Yu.V.** Metamorphoses of the Postmodern Discourse
and Current Challenges Neomodernism 97
- Boltenkova L.F.** On Putin's Long State
(Reflections on the Article of Vladislav Surkov) 103

POLITICAL PROCESSES, INSTITUTIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

- Medvedev N.P., Slizovskiy D.E., Glebov V.A.** Gorbachev-Yeltsin – Putin:
Discussion around Models of Political Regime. What's next? 112

PROBLEMS OF EURASIAN AND POST-SOVIET COOPERATION

- Zalysin I.Yu.** Migration as a Factor in the Rise
of Terrorism of Religious Extremists 126
- Chemshit A.A., Statsenko O.S.** Ukrainian Political Project:
from Government Insufficiency to Social Degradation 131
- Krutko A.A.** A Pragmatic Model of Russian-Kyrgyz Relations
in the Context of Eurasian Integration 140

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND WORLD POLITICS

- Karadze T.V., Tombu D.V.** Problems and Contradictions
of Migration Policy in Modern Europe 149
- Martynenko E.V., Penzina A.I.** Analysis of the Role of the US
Printed Media in the Information War Between the USA and Russia 157
- Pashchenko L.V.** Russia's National Interests in the Arctic
and the Problems of their Implementation 164
- Davydov V.N., Jorge Augusto King, Idris Ahmad** World-System Analysis
and Regional Conflicts 170
- Kong Dekun** The Concept of Greater Eurasian Partnership
and "One Belt and One Road" Initiative 180
- Ju Orlindu** African Direction
in the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation 187
- Freddie Agonnode** Democracy at the Service
of Foreign Policy of the Republic of South Africa 196
- Shir Aka** Najibullah Russia's Strategy Towards Afghanistan 203
- Somar Ganem** Syrian Studies at the Institute
of Oriental Studies (the 200th Anniversary of the Founding
of the Institute of Oriental Studies of RAS) 208
- Olivier Védrine** A European Defense: Europe Will Have to Defend Itself 216

REVIEWS

<i>Pryakhin V.F., Medvedev N.P.</i> Review of the Article by A.A. Krutyko “Pragmatic Model of Russian-Kirghiz Relations in the Context of Eurasian Integration”	219
<i>Slizovski D.E., Medvedev N.P.</i> Review of the Article “A European Defense: Europe Will Have to Defend Itself” by Professor (H.C.) Olivier Védrine, French Journalist And Political Scientist	222
OUR AUTHORS.....	228

AFRICAN DIRECTION IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In his article, the author attempts to scientifically analyze and understand the problems of cooperation between Russia and the countries of the African continent in the diplomatic, economic, trade, ideological and other areas of cooperation. The construction of relations between the USSR and the countries of the African continent began after the end of the WW2 and was caused, first of all, by the need to find allies in various parts of the planet. In the postwar years and until 1990, cooperation developed most actively, in several directions at once. Specialists from the USSR were engaged in the training of the local people, building of factories and the economy as a whole, social security and resolution of the regional disputes, etc. But, unfortunately, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and to the present day, cooperation has not been restored to the previous level, primarily due to the fact that the vacant niches were occupied by the Western countries.

Key words: *African countries, USSR, Russian Federation, education, cooperation, economy, ideology.*

Until the mid-1950s, Africa occupied no place in the USSR foreign affairs agenda. First of all, this was due to the fact that previously the Soviet Union was engaged in the post-war reconstruction of the country, the development of the nuclear project and other defense projects, which significantly limited its financial and other resources. In addition, until the 50s, many African countries remained colonies.

The growing cold war between the USSR and the USA, the two major powers, forced the Soviet Union to expand its spheres of influence primarily due to the need to have allies in different parts of the world, as well as to spread its own ideology in different regions of the world [1].

The destruction of the colonial system in Africa was considered by the USSR as a transformation of these countries from colonies into a vulnerable place of the world imperialism. In the 1950s, this trend forced the USSR leadership to deploy national liberation movements in the African countries and turn them into

a part of the world revolutionary process. The leaders of these countries were perceived by the leadership of the USSR as allies in the struggle against imperialism, regardless of their political orientation and attitude to the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

K. Nkrumah wrote that “the Soviet Union supports the independence of African countries by virtue of the very nature of its state and constitution.”

It was very logical, since the USSR had no colonial past and its constituting republics, first of all, the Central Asian republics were its full members and in fact were in many ways subsidized from Moscow. The USSR pursued in its Asian republics a policy of industrialization, built enterprises, schools and hospitals, and engaged in the development of these territories and their unification into a single industrial complex of the Soviet state [3. P. 54-69].

Western countries, on the contrary, largely pursued a policy of genocide in the colonies that belonged to them, engaged in blatant robbery, organized internecine wars, took out available resources, etc. In addition, the people of Africa remembered the slave trade, when people were loaded into ships and transported to the metropolises as a free labor force, kept in inhuman conditions.

In view of the above factors, cooperation and interaction with the USSR seemed to many of them to be a logical choice on the road to freedom, democracy and industrial development of their countries with the help of powerful technological support and assistance from the USSR. The leaders of the Soviet state were opponents of neocolonialism.

The USSR did not seek any special privileges or rights in African countries or in other parts of the world, did not claim the wealth of the African countries and did not attempt to appropriate the minerals or hydrocarbons, which were later found and developed in such countries as Egypt, Sudan, Angola and others. That is why the policy of the Soviet Union met with complete understanding and response from the local population, as well as from many government leaders.

The rapid post-war economic growth of the USSR, as well as the socio-economic basis that was laid by the leaders of the Soviet state at home have become very attractive for the African countries, that have just gained independence from their metropolises.

Consequently, the USSR declared that its main slogan in Africa was anti-imperialist direction based on decolonization, as well as the need to recognize the rights of African peoples to national liberation and their struggle against the fascist aggression, carried out in the 30s of XX century. The main factor in the formation of the liberation movements in African countries was the end of the Second World War and the defeat of the fascist Germany by the USSR. This led to a sharp weakening of the “imperialist forces” on the African continent [4. P. 37-43].

After the establishment of the United Nations - the UN, at the initiative of the USSR, the foreign affairs agencies from the UN tribunes lobbied the draft UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

To this end, for the development of the Declaration, a Committee of Ten was established, comprising India, Indonesia, Japan, Lebanon, Iraq, Ghana, Guinea, the United Arab Republic (UAR), Morocco and Ethiopia.

The position of the USSR and its intransigence with colonialism had a significant impact on the position of “neutral countries.” This served as a powerful incentive for African leaders to reject the original draft resolution, which contained only the general principles of decolonization, without any substantial specifics. On November 28, 1960, the leaders of African countries introduced for the UN discussion a more radical draft declaration on the independence of colonial countries and peoples, which, by its principles and essence was very close to a similar project proposed by the USSR. As a result of the vote, the project proposed by the Afro-Asian side was adopted without specifying dates for granting independence.

The USSR was building its policy in Africa on the principle of equality, both in the political and in the socio-economic spheres. The Soviet Union opposed the attempts of the imperialist countries to transform the African continent into a region of military-political confrontation. The USSR proclaimed the principles of the absence of racism, fight against backwardness, poverty and apartheid on the continent. It was also declared that the imperialist countries were trying to justify the killing of Africans by the struggle with the Soviet Union [5. P. 157-186].

The year 1960 went down in history as the “Year of Africa”, because in that year 17 independent states appeared on the world map. But the “cold war” imposed by the countries of the West and, above all, the USA, left its imprint on the cooperation with the newly formed states.

The split of the world community into two opposing camps forced the leadership of the USSR and the USA to build not only defense policy inside their countries, but also to acquire as many allies as possible all over the planet. It can be concluded that the interaction with the African countries was built primarily on an alliance basis. The USSR developed long-term programs of interaction with the African countries and formed the necessary regulatory framework.

The USSR established cultural and scientific cooperation with the countries of Africa and provided for the exchange of experience in the field of science and technology, interaction between scientists, students, researchers, specialists, etc. Under the programs of scientific exchange, African scientists were invited to improve their skills at the Soviet research centers. Substantial assistance was given in the preparation of students, contacts were established between research libraries and other research institutions, there was mutual recognition of diplomas of higher educational, scientific degrees, etc. [6].

After some time, such cooperation became an integrated and streamlined mechanism based on the development of appropriate programs and regulatory support. This led to the mutual understanding between peoples and the development of cultural interaction, which allowed to reduce internal tensions between African countries, a remnant of the colonial past.

In those historical conditions, there was an urgent need to train qualified specialists in all branches of scientific knowledge, with which educational programs and universities of the USSR successfully coped, taking African students to study, and also sending their teachers to various countries to work there.

The Soviet representatives also actively studied in African countries. First of all, they studied local history, languages, mentality, peculiarities of the past political system, traditions and customs, culture, etc. It was necessary, first of all, to help specialists from the Soviet Union to adapt favorably in the local environment and level out possible misunderstandings and conflicts with the local population [9. P. 613-622].

At that time, such branch as “Soviet African studies” was developed, which is still one of the important components of modern historical science. African studies examines the issues associated with the peculiarities of the socio-economic development of the African countries, specifics of their political organization, the consequences of colonialism, the formation of national policies, etc. Soviet specialists obtained an invaluable experience of cooperation and interaction, which can be used at present.

The Soviet Union had a significant influence on the formation of the modern intelligentsia in African countries, who were supposed to be supporters of socialist ideology in these territories. These people received a really high-quality Soviet education, allowing them to bring benefits to their homeland. Many of those students still have fond memories of the USSR, retaining them throughout their lives.

From 1957 to 1990, the USSR helped to train more than 400,000 qualified specialists from African countries. 15 African countries received significant assistance in building their own educational systems, as well as in the direct construction of secondary special and higher educational institutions [11].

Thus, it can be said that the USSR made a decisive contribution to the development of the African countries, primarily by defeating fascist Germany, which made it possible to remove the shackles of colonialism.

Later, until 1990, the policy of the USSR towards African states was, by and large, stable, but during the period of perestroika and further on, from the moment of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation began to change dramatically. In the first half of the 90s, there was a collapse of relations with African states. The Russian Federation not only withdrew its troops from the GDR, but also left the countries with which it was connected by the warmest friendly relations that had previously been the scene of confrontation between the two superpowers, the USSR and the USA.

Curtailing interests around the world was presented as a lack of further need for confrontation with the United States and Western countries. With the destruction of the USSR, the leadership of Russia pinned hopes on the fact that the new Russia will join the world capitalist community on the principles of

equal membership and mutually beneficial cooperation. But in reality, everything turned out differently. NATO began an active policy of moving eastward, right up to the borders of Russia, as well as destabilizing the political situation in the North Caucasus.

In the new realities, the main task of the country's leadership was to prevent the "parade of sovereignties" and the break of Russia as a patchwork quilt to smaller states, contrary to the policies of many "appanage princes" eager to separate their territories from Russia, as the sole owners. This might have led to the final elimination of the Russian statehood and the establishment of a unipolar world.

The countries of Africa took the collapse of the USSR extremely negatively. First of all because they had lost a single center that ensured peace, tranquility and prosperity in their land. In addition, African countries were losing a source of material and military-political assistance. Moreover, many were worried about a return to the colonial past, since it was the position of the USSR that allowed African states to free themselves from colonialism.

The withdrawal of the USSR from Africa also caused certain concerns among African government leaders about the policies of the United States and Western countries regarding their countries. And the result was not long in coming. With the tacit consent of the United States, France and Belgium provoked the genocide in Rwanda, during which from April 8 to July 14, 1994, about a million inhabitants were killed. The Belgian military planned the Hutu tribal aggression against the Tutsi tribe by inciting propaganda through the media, and also provided military and political support for the mass genocide.

The Belgium and the United Nations military left Rwanda at the height of the genocide leaving the warring tribes alone. The United States and the United Nations have chosen not to intervene in this situation. As a result of this bloodshed, at least 10,000 people died daily. After that, Rwanda for a long time plunged into chaos and destruction. Massive diseases, the HIV epidemic, etc., have left a long lasting mark on Rwanda's history and have set back its development for several decades.

Of course, if the USSR were present on the continent and had the same influence, there could be no act of such a genocide. In connection with the above, it can be concluded that the withdrawal of the USSR from Africa turned into a tragedy for many states almost immediately in the first years after the collapse of the Soviet state.

After analyzing the 1993 foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation it can be concluded that the country's leadership was not interested in preserving and further developing relations with African states. Africa was in the ninth place out of ten in the list of interests of the Russian Federation on the world stage.

That document stated that it was necessary to develop relations with those African countries that may be sales markets for the Russian products and those that may become its suppliers of raw materials. Nothing was said about the former

ideological, socio-economic or political cooperation. The foreign policy strategy has changed radically, the ideological component was not to be extended to any other country, but it was also prohibited within the Russian Federation, as is clear from its main law, the Constitution [7. P. 14-37].

The main principles of the new Russia's foreign policy after the collapse of the USSR with regard to the African states were as follows:

- strengthening the security of the Russian Federation;
- ensuring the earliest transition of the Russian Federation to a market economy, through the development of trade relations with African countries;
- successful integration of the Russian Federation into the world community, including the development of cooperation with African countries;
- readiness of the Russian Federation to maintain stability at the global level, preventing and resolving both internal and external conflicts.

In fact, there has been a shift in the vector of interaction with the countries of the West and the United States in the ideological, political, trade and economic spheres. As a result, the countries of the West and the United States received significant levers of influence on the countries of Africa, which previously carried out close cooperation with the USSR.

Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war and the arms race, there was no need to spend huge sums on military budgets. And the countries of Africa hoped that in view of this, even greater funds would be allocated for their development. However, this did not happen, since the reduction of the military budget occurred only in the new Russia and the former Soviet republics. The United States did not reduce its military budget and only increased it in all the following years [8. P. 8-25].

But the countries of the West and the USA, nevertheless, changed their attitude towards some African countries. Many regimes that were considered authoritarian were burdensome in the new realities and the ideals of democracy declared by the Western countries were contrary to the political attitudes of the authoritarian African leaders. Therefore, due to the lack of inter-bloc confrontation, these regimes have lost their relevance and their financing has ceased to be justified. As a result, the leaders of authoritarian states were invited to join the democratization process, especially given that in many African states all the necessary conditions have already matured.

However, in the second half of the 90s, the leadership of the new Russia came to realize and understand the fact that a unipolar world poses a danger to all human development. The ruling elites have an understanding that the loss of allies around the world has led to the fact that Russia has lost its ability to influence the world situation.

The first direction on the path of reorientation to a multipolar world structure and its own national interests, different from the interests of the Western countries and the United States, was the 1994 Concept of Russian policy in Africa.

That Concept emphasized that Russia was objectively interested in cooperation with African countries in the framework of joint strengthening of global security. The development of political contacts and interaction at various levels was envisaged to implement such strategy [10. P. 54-59].

In addition, the Concept encouraged cooperation of certain regions of the Russian Federation with the African continent. Various non-state forms of cooperation, such as the development of entrepreneurship and private business, received encouragement.

Further on, the Foreign Policy Concept adopted in the 2000s mentioned cooperation with the African countries on the periphery, ahead of only Latin American countries. Only a few sentences in the whole Concept were devoted to the cooperation with African countries, stressing the necessity to develop cooperation in the sphere of settling military conflicts, as well as connecting the Russian Federation to economic processes on the African continent.

The document also drew attention to the economic backwardness of the African continent, having large economic potential, rich in natural resources, it also pointed to the possibility of influencing the outcome of the UN vote when solving international issues.

The next concept of the Russian foreign policy was approved by decree of the President D.A. Medvedev on July 15, 2008. In it, Africa was still in the penultimate place, being ahead of only the countries of Latin America. The document noted that the Russian Federation and African countries need to develop cooperation in the settlement of regional conflicts, as well as developing political interaction in order to connect the Russian Federation with the economic processes in the region.

The 2013 Concept of the Russian foreign policy puts Africa on the last place in the list of national foreign policy interests, even after the Latin American countries. The concept proposes to focus on “improving political dialogue and promoting mutually beneficial trade and economic cooperation, the assistance to the settlement and prevention of regional conflicts and crisis situations in Africa. An important part of this direction is the development of partnership relations with the African Union and subregional organizations [2].”

Such foreign policy in respect of the African states has several causes. First, the leadership of the Russian Federation is fully aware that since the collapse of the USSR, more than 20 years ago, other countries, primarily the United States, the EU member states, China and others have long ago gained influence on the African continent. It is quite difficult for the Russian Federation in its present economic and political realities to push them off the African political arena. Secondly, the Russian Federation does not receive proposals on mutually beneficial cooperation from the African states.

But, in recent years, the government of the Russian Federation began to pay more and more attention to the African countries. There was a dialogue between

the BRIC group and the Republic of South Africa. Russia is looking for new partners from the non-Western countries to develop mutually beneficial trade cooperation and is ready to allow products from certain African countries into its market. In 2009, when the President of the Russian Federation D.A. Medvedev toured Africa (Nigeria, Angola, Egypt and Namibia), he voiced the thesis that the cooperation with the African countries was overdue. The relations of the Russian Federation with many African states have not been interrupted since the collapse of the USSR and have decades of active interaction in various fields.

At present, the Russian Federation is attempting to regain its lost influence, if not in all, then at least in some African countries that was lost after the collapse of the USSR. First of all, this is cooperation in the development of important sectors of the economy in which the Russian Federation has a competitive advantage over leading world powers. For this end, debts of some African states, worth more than US\$ 20 billion were written off.

The countries of Africa and the Russian Federation have objective prerequisites for the development of a multilateral cooperation. First of all, their positions on strengthening global security, expanding economic cooperation, providing humanitarian assistance and other issues coincide. The leaders of African countries realize that the modern world order should be multipolar and without an active participation of the Russian Federation the stability of the regional system in terms of economy and security will be incomplete.

Thus, it can be stated that in real geopolitical and economic realities the Russian Federation is building a foreign policy strategy in Africa with the account for historical and economic realities. The relationships on the continent have shifted from ideological confrontation to the mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields.

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