

## REPORTS

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### BRICS AND AFRICA: NEW OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE WORLD ORDER TRANSFORMATION

On January 1, 2024, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, invited to join BRICS at the 15th BRICS Summit held in Pretoria in August 2023, officially became full members of this organization gaining strength and enhancing international standing.

According to the President of Russia V. V. Putin, BRICS expansion is rooted in the objective process of the global multipolarity formation. "What is at the core of the expansion process? This process is based on objective reality. The multipolar world is creating itself, as a matter of fact. We can speed up this process or someone can try to slow it down and maybe even achieve some kind of reduction in the pace of building a multipolar world. Anyway, its creation is inevitable," Head of the Russian state said to a correspondent of the China Media Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

Today, as is known, the global center of economic power is gradually shifting from the West to the East or, depending on the coordinate system, from the North to the South. In the context of long-term global trends, the conditional West, perhaps for the first time in the last 500 (and certainly 300) years, is facing the prospect of a gradual transformation into a relative periphery. This means that even within the current market model, in the not-so-distant future the bulk of global production and the bulk of global consumption will shift from the northern Euro-Atlantic to the south and east – to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the market model, this means that the manufacturer will adapt not to the tastes and needs of the conditional European (including Americans, Canadians, and Australians) but to those of Asians and Africans, who are included because at present most representatives of the middle class, which supply the main demand for goods and services, live in the Asian region, but from around 2040, according to UN calculations, the growth of the middle class will occur not at the expense of Asia but

at the expense of Africa,<sup>3</sup> while the impoverishment of the middle class of Europe and the United States has already begun.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, BRICS expansion, in fact, implies the strengthening of resistance to the Western-centric world order, which retains little strength but is already being destroyed. The association, which expresses the interests of the world's majority countries and embodies the search for a more equitable and multipolar world order, is turning to the wider political, cultural, economic and geographical space of the Global South with admission of new members.

The BRICS organization has become an attractive magnet for other states in recent years. This statement was made by Russian President Vladimir Putin in a conversation with the participants of the World Youth Festival. According to him, the association has become serious and powerful. This can be seen by the desire of other countries to join the union.

"A magnet that attracts many countries of the world. Indeed, there are more and more of them," – stated the Russian leader.<sup>5</sup>

The interest in the BRICS membership is truly tremendous. Algeria, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Venezuela, Vietnam, Cuba, Honduras, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Senegal, Thailand, and Pakistan have applied to join the association in addition to the members already admitted.

The weight of Africa and the Greater Middle East has increased significantly in BRICS after the expansion. Each of these regions is represented in the organization today by three states. Africa is now represented, in addition to the RSA, by Egypt, Africa's largest economy by GDP, and by Ethiopia, the second most populous country on the African continent. The BRICS also included Saudi Arabia, the largest Arab economy, as well as the UAE and Iran. There is a reason for that. These territories are the centers of modern geopolitical challenges, but, at the same time, they have enormous resource and human potential.

So why are Africans showing such tremendous interest in the BRICS despite their continued dependence on the US and its allies?

The first and most important reason is that African peoples do not want to live by the rules imposed on them

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<sup>2</sup> В. В. Путин: в основе расширения БРИКС лежит объективный процесс формирования многополярности // ТАСС. 2023. 16 окт. URL: <https://tass.ru/politika/19021549> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>3</sup> African Economic Outlook 2017 // African Development Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations Development Programme. URL: [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/african-economic-outlook-2017\\_aeo-2017-en#page30](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/african-economic-outlook-2017_aeo-2017-en#page30) (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Абрамова И. О., Фитуни Л. Л. Второй саммит «Россия–Африка»: от наследия колониализма к суверенитету и развитию // Мировая экономика и международные отношения. 2023. Т. 76, № 12. С. 35–48; Абрамова И. О., Фитуни Л. Л. Вопросы современной африканистики и проблемы развития. Избранные статьи и научные доклады (2012–2022 гг.). М.: Ин-т Африки РАН, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> В. В. Путин: БРИКС стала мощной и притягательной организацией для других стран // Аргументы и факты. 2024. 7 марта. URL: [https://aif.ru/politics/putin\\_briks\\_stala\\_moshchnoy\\_i\\_prityagatelnoy\\_organizatsiey\\_dlya\\_druzhih\\_stran](https://aif.ru/politics/putin_briks_stala_moshchnoy_i_prityagatelnoy_organizatsiey_dlya_druzhih_stran) (accessed: 01.09.2024).

by the West. And unlike the political decolonization of the fifties and seventies of the last century, the main impetus for change lies in the complex synergetic aggregate of the new qualities of modern African statehood in the areas of economy, maturation of sovereign nations and consolidation of the resources available for incremental advance.

African countries are no longer a broken set of fifty weak and poor political units forced to generally be in the wake of the decisive dominance of the former metropolises. Over the years of independence, they have developed modern national economic complexes, albeit with varying difficulty level, efficiency and self-sufficiency, and human capital has undergone an unprecedented evolution towards qualitative and quantitative growth.

The shifts in the global economy and politics have changed the global economic landscape and increased interest in the African continent, which is transforming from an object to a subject of international relations. After Russia's open challenge to the United States and its allies back in Syria and then in Ukraine, Africans realized that together with the countries of the Global South, as well as within the BRICS, they had a unique opportunity to achieve real sovereignty and free themselves from the legacy of colonialism not in word but in deed. Today, the richest continent in terms of its wealth continues to be the poorest in terms of living standards, as the West continues to shamelessly plunder its natural and human resources under a unipolar world.

The modern prosperity of the West is based, at its core, on essentially colonial methods of robbing peoples. Colonialism didn't go anywhere, it just moved from the political to the economic, information, and humanitarian spheres. The dominance of the dollar, the use of the sanctions mechanism, the preservation of technological dependence on the West, the destruction of national identity through the imposition of an anti-human perverted system of values, absolute dominance in the information space, through which false perceptions of events that occur in the modern world are formed, direct bribery and reformatting of national elites – these are the tools of the new colonialism. These tools apply today not only to Africa, but also to Russia and most states of the Global South. It was the BRICS countries, primarily Russia, that really challenged the “rule-based order”, offering Africans not a colonial but a mutually beneficial formula of partnership between sovereign states without imposing their own value system. In this sense, the words of Ibrahim Traoré, the leader of Burkina Faso, are very revealing: “Why does resource-rich Africa remain the poorest region of the world? African countries have suffered for decades from a barbaric and brutal form of colonialism and imperialism, which could be called a modern form of slavery. However, a slave who does not fight [for his freedom] is not worthy of any indulgence. The heads of African states should not behave like puppets in the hands of the imperialists. We must ensure that our countries are self-sufficient, including as regards food supplies, and can meet all of the needs of our people. Glory and respect to our peoples, victory to our peoples! Homeland or death!” – Traoré summed up at the second Russia-Africa Summit, quoting the words of Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto “Che” Guevara.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Президент Буркина-Фасо считает, что роль России и Африки в борьбе с нацизмом замалчивается // ТАСС. 2023. 28 июля. URL: <https://tass.ru/>

The second reason for Africa's growing interest in the BRICS is changing economic balance of power in the world. Today, the bulk of real, not virtual, production is outside the West. The five BRICS countries already contribute more to global GDP than the industrialized G7 countries. According to the data of the British Company, Acorn Macro Consulting, published at the end of March 2023, the BRICS association now provides for 31.5% of global GDP, while the G7's share of the global economy has fallen to 30%. BRICS is expected to generate more than 50% of global GDP by 2030, and with the admission of new members, this figure could be reached much earlier.<sup>2</sup> But Africa, too, has its own definitive advantages in shaping the new world order. Africa accounts for about a third of the world's natural resources.<sup>3</sup> To this date, Africa is: 90% of the world's platinum reserves; 80% of the world's gold, diamond and chromium reserves; 61% of the world's manganese reserves; 60% of the world's cobalt reserves.<sup>4</sup> This should be added by water, forest and agricultural resources. And if the global GDP was not calculated according to the IMF methodology, but based on the real material wealth of nations, Africa's share in the world economy would not be 3%, but would be much higher. Under these conditions, it is advantageous for Africa and the BRICS countries to act not as competitors but as partners in the commodity and fuel markets, which will provide them with more favorable positions. At the same time, Africa is unwilling to be limited to the role of raw material appendages of old and new industrial giants, and, therefore, is interested in deep processing of these raw materials and growth in the production of value-added goods. On this way, the BRICS countries have a wide range of necessary technologies and Africa has a rapidly growing consumer market that doubles every 5 years and provides demand for both its own and foreign goods.

The third reason is to ensure security in the broad sense of the word. First of all, it concerns the prevention of military conflicts and the fight against terrorism, as these aspects are highly relevant to Africa today. Africans are well aware that the West is not only incapable of resolving these issues but, on the contrary, uses the tools of terrorism and military involvement in the internal affairs of sovereign states in its own vested interests. That's what happened with Libya, that's what's happening in West and Central Africa and other parts of the continent. The United States and Europe have literally flooded the African continent with military bases and troops, and conflicts have only increased, and terrorism has not gone anywhere. Recent events in West Africa, where a series of anti-French military coups have taken place, confirm that Africans are increasingly reluctant to rely on the West, particularly France, which is pursuing its mercenary aims of maintaining its influence and access to cheap African resources. CAR, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger,

[mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18391511?utm\\_source=google.com&utm\\_medium=organic&utm\\_campaign=google.com&utm\\_referrer=google.com](https://mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/18391511?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com) (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>2</sup> Разделение мировой экономики // Коммерсантъ. 2023. 20 апр. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5915725> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>3</sup> Mapping Africa's Mineral Resources // Aljazeera. 2018. 20 Febr. URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/20/mapping-africas-natural-resources/> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>4</sup> African Natural Resources Center. Catalyzing Growth and Development Through Effective Natural Resources Management. URL: [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/anrc/AfDB\\_ANRC\\_BROCHURE\\_en.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/anrc/AfDB_ANRC_BROCHURE_en.pdf) (accessed: 01.09.2024).

Gabon have already turned away from France, and through it, from the collective West.<sup>1</sup> Similar processes are taking place today in Senegal, where the main opposition candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who turned 44 on March 25, became the new president of the country following the results of elections on March 24, 2024. Faye presents himself as a proponent of “left-wing pan-Africanism” and advocates for the return of real sovereignty to Senegal. He proposes to “clean up the political class,” renegotiate oil and gas contracts, and abandon the CFA franc in settlements (a monetary unit introduced in 1945 in the then French colonies in West and Equatorial Africa).<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Sahel countries, like most other African states, see the BRICS countries, primarily Russia, as reliable guarantors of their security.

However, the concept of security is not limited to the military aspect. For Africans today, questions of struggle against famine are becoming more pressing than ever. According to FAO, the number of undernourished Africans in 2022 was 276 million, up 89.1 million from 2014. “About 44% of undernourished people in the continent live in East Africa, 27% in West Africa, 20% in Central Africa, 6.2% in North Africa and 2.4% in South Africa,” the paper reported. The number of people in the countries of West and Central Africa, which will experience food shortage, has reached 48 million by the middle of 2023. Experts of the World Food Program note that among the countries of this region, Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria are in the most difficult situation with food supply now.<sup>3</sup>

Egypt (44 million tons), Nigeria (31 million tons) and Ethiopia (26 million tons) remain the top grain consuming countries in the African continent, accounting for 37% of Africa’s total grain consumption. It is quite remarkable that Egypt and Ethiopia have become the members of BRICS. These countries are followed by Algeria, Morocco (BRICS candidates), South Africa, Tanzania, Mali, Sudan, Kenya, Niger and Tunisia – which together accounted for additional 38%. Each year, countries on the African continent import approximately 70–80 million tons of grain crops, of which about 50 million tons is accounted for wheat.<sup>4</sup> In this regard, African countries are hoping to establish new institutions, including in the area of food security under the BRICS authority.

It is quite noteworthy that African countries are traditional major buyers of Russian food products, primarily wheat. It is imported annually from Russia by 30–35 African countries, and for some of them it is the only or the largest foreign supplier of wheat. The dependence of African countries on wheat supplies from Russia in 2021 was 100% for Benin, more than 70% for Sudan, more than 60% for Egypt, Tanzania, Rwanda, Madagascar, Republic of Congo, more than 50% for Burkina Faso, Senegal, Burundi and Uganda. Russia also dominates the wheat imports of such countries as RSA, Togo, Namibia, Cabo Verde, and Malawi. The five largest importers of Russian wheat and

meslin (a mixture of soft wheat and rye in the ratio of 2:1) in 2021 were (in thous. tons): Egypt – 1552, Nigeria – 253, Sudan – 203, Cameroon – 137 and Libya – 108.<sup>5</sup>

Most African countries experience a severe shortage of fertilizers. According to the 2022 UN Development Program, fertilizer use in Africa’s agricultural sector remains at a relatively low level. By comparison, East Asia and the Pacific Region use an average of 300 kg of fertilizers per 1 ha, South Asia and Latin America use 170 kg/ha, Europe and Central Asia use 75–80 kg/ha, and Sub-Saharan Africa uses only 20 kg/ha.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, Africa is critically dependent on fertilizer import.<sup>7</sup> Out of the 7 million fertilizers consumed in the continent, 5.7 million or 81% are imported. In the structure of African fertilizer import, 16.6% is accounted for by Morocco, 11% – by Russia, 9.3% – by Saudi Arabia, 8.1% – by RSA and 6.6% – by China, 4.6% – by UAE and 3.1% – by Egypt.<sup>8</sup> Thus, in the current enlarged composition, the BRICS countries supply 42.3% of all fertilizers imported to Africa. It is quite remarkable that Russia is the second most important fertilizer exporter to the African continent.

In addition to supplying food and fertilizers to African countries, the BRICS countries, including Russia, are ready to share their advanced agricultural technologies that will allow Africans to independently increase agricultural productivity and provide the population with food by intensifying their own agricultural production.

And herein lies another reason for African countries’ interest in the BRICS. Unlike the West, which preserves the technological underdevelopment of not only Africa but also other nations of the world, the BRICS countries are ready to share their technologies in order to build together a modern economy for the benefit of the people.<sup>9</sup>

The energy sector has become another critical area of Africa’s cooperation with the BRICS countries. To this day, more than half of the African population still has no access to electricity.

“Energy is a key enabler of industrialization. If you don’t have it, you are out. I don’t know if you have noticed, but BRICS will become an energy superpower if we combine our capabilities,” said Brazilian expert Marco Fernandes, a researcher at Tricontinental Institute for Social Research. The expert explained that 45% of the world’s oil reserves, as well as almost 56% of gas reserves are accounted for by the BRICS countries. “As far as nuclear power is concerned, Russia produces half of the enriched uranium that goes to the plants. 18% is accounted for by China. That is, together Russia and China produce two-thirds of the world’s enriched uranium,” he said.<sup>10</sup>

Another important issue of concern to the Global South countries, including Africans, is the use of independent financial instruments in our mutual settlements.

At the 2023 BRICS summit, they spoke about creating a working group to create their own currency, it was

<sup>1</sup> *Абрамова И. О., Фитуни Л. Л.* Op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Президентом Сенегала избрали дублера главного оппозиционера страны // РБК. 2024. 25 марта. URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/25/03/2024/6601ba2d9a79471dab4f1a7e?ysclid=luhlshsgqg162507013> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>3</sup> FAOSTAT. Suite of Food Security Indicators // FAO 2023. URL: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Потребление зерна в Африке продолжает расти // Агровестник. 2020. 13 июля. URL: <https://agrovosti.net/lib/industries/cereals/potreblenie-zerna-v-afrike-prodolzhayet-rasti.html> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>5</sup> UNCTAD data. URL: [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osginf2022d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osginf2022d1_en.pdf) (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>6</sup> Towards Food Security and Sovereignty in Africa. URL: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-09/Towards%20Food%20Security%20and%20Sovereignty%20in%20Africa.pdf> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>7</sup> *Абрамова И. О., Фитуни Л. Л.* Op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> TradeMap. ITC, 2021. URL: [trademap.org](https://trademap.org) (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>9</sup> *Абрамова И. О., Фитуни Л. Л.* Op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Эксперт назвал объединение БРИКС мировой энергетической суперсилой // РИА Новости. 2024. 1 апр. URL: <https://ria.ru/20240401/briks-1937081724.html?ysclid=lugxk3z3bh746208355> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

noted that BRICS members would enter into agreements based on their national currencies. It is also planned to develop the necessary payment systems to ensure cheap and secure flow of money between participants. In this context, the BRICS summit to be held in Russia in 2024 will prioritize three issues: enhancing the role of BRICS in the international financial system; increasing cooperation between the banks of the BRICS member countries and the use of member countries' currencies; and promoting tax and customs cooperation among the BRICS member countries.

Since BRICS economies have their own peculiarities, a single currency may not be as practical at this stage, but a cryptocurrency or gold-based currency that could be used in international trade could be a potential competitor to the dollar. BRICS countries are currently discussing the use of digital currencies that will allow them to exchange financial data and transactions outside the global Swift system. The digital dirham issued by the Central Bank of the UAE can be marked as a pioneering development to date. China's cross-border payment system offers clearing services for RMB transactions between banks of different countries. Russia's fast payment system, India's single payment interface, Pix, a fast digital payment system developed by the Central Bank of Brazil, and mobile money (M-Pesa) used in many African countries are examples that can contribute to the development of the BRICS digital payment systems.<sup>1</sup>

Few people know that the world's first online payment was made in Kenya. Today, online payments are prevalent in most African nations. Rwanda, for example, has declared the abandonment of the cash use. In Nigeria, which is the largest African country by population, calculations are already being done in e-naira. Cryptocurrencies are spreading rapidly in the continent. In fact, a recent report by Chainalysis blockchain data platform revealed that between July 2020 and June 2021, Africans received cryptocurrency payments amounting to 105.6 billion dollars, up 1,200% from a year earlier.<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that Chainalysis ranks Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria in the top 10 countries for cryptocurrency use.<sup>3</sup> Digital currencies make it easier to offer and control money, transfer money quickly and keep full track of it. Thus, a single digital currency could be an important step towards de-dollarization,<sup>4</sup> and therefore, towards greater financial independence for countries of the Global South, including Africa.

Today, we are witnessing a truly tremendous shift in politics and economy, as the recent periphery countries become significant players in the new emerging world.

Modern Africa is gradually becoming both a significant consumer market and a supplier of labor for the global economy. Africa's population already exceeds 1.3 billion and is growing at the fastest rate in the world. According to UN forecasts, in 2050 more than a quarter of the world's population will live in Africa. Today, 60% of this population are young people under the age of 25, and it is young people who provide the demand for modern goods and services. According to the United Nations, from 2040, two-thirds of the growth in global labor will come from the African continent. The consumer market in Africa doubles every five years, and the growth rate of the middle class, which forms the basis of demand for modern goods and services, already exceeds the corresponding indicators of Asian states.<sup>5</sup>

Under the transformation of the world order and changing the role of countries and regions in world development, the countries of the Global South need to combine forces in the struggle for more equitable and free world, where every nation and people have the right to decide their own destiny and make their own choices. With the addition of new members, the total population in the BRICS countries has exceeded 3.5 billion people, and GDP has approached \$30 trillion, or one-third of the world output. Solving the problems of food and energy security, formation of own information sphere, development of technology, financial instruments, formation of knowledge and competence base, technological and human resource potential are only some of the possible areas of cooperation between the BRICS countries and the African continent.

There is no doubt that the next decade will see profound shifts in the political, military, economic, energy, technological and human potentials of the world, and the task of the BRICS countries is to become co-authors of these changes, strengthening the sovereignty of the countries of the world majority in the broadest sense of this word. This is the key priority around which we must pool resources and interests today. BRICS can become a center for protecting and promoting national interests of different countries and peoples and for building a new, more equitable world order.

African countries consider their interaction with the BRICS countries as an opportunity to consolidate their subjectivity in global politics and economy, strengthen their real economic, political, cultural, information and technological sovereignty, accelerate the process of qualitative development of their national economies and improve the social welfare.

<sup>1</sup> Anadolu Ajansı: Блок БРИКС расширяется против США // ИноСМИ. 2024. 14 янв. URL: <https://inosmi.ru/20240114/briks-267413274.html> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>2</sup> Абрамова И. О., Фитуни Л. Л. Пути повышения эффективности африканской стратегии России в условиях кризиса существующего правопорядка // Вестник Российской академии наук. 2022. Т. 92, № 9. С. 837–848.

<sup>3</sup> Ndemo B. The role of cryptocurrencies in sub-Saharan Africa // Brookings. 2022. 16 March. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/03/16/the-role-of-cryptocurrencies-in-sub-saharan-africa/> (accessed: 01.09.2024).

<sup>4</sup> Anadolu Ajansı: Блок БРИКС расширяется...

<sup>5</sup> World Population Prospects 2019 // UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. URL: <https://population.un.org/wpp/> (accessed: 01.09.2024).