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FINE-TUNING OF NETWORKING IN THE LINGUOCULTURAL SPACE OF THE BRICS

In the Foreign Policy Concept of Russia, the term “network diplomacy” has been endenized since 2008, and the term “network alliance” – since 2013.⁵ Both concern the deve-

lopment of bilateral and multilateral relations with states and interstate associations and international organizations as well; imply flexible forms of participation in multilateral structures in order to collectively seek answers to common challenges and replace block approaches to solving international problems. In 2016, the Foreign Policy Concept emphasized again that Russia’s task was to “promote the formation of network alliances and Russia’s active participation in them”⁶ and reaffirmed the demand for network diplomacy, which at that time proved to be a progressive method of interaction with states and integration associations.

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⁵ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации : утв. Президентом РФ Д. А. Медведевым 12 июля 2008 г. // Министерство иностранных дел РФ : [website]. 2024. URL: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1670707/ (accessed: 04.03.2024) ; Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации : утв. Президентом РФ В. В. Путиным 12 февраля 2013 г. // Президент России : [website]. 2024. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17520/> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

⁶ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации : утв. Президентом РФ В. В. Путиным 30 ноября 2016 г. // Президент России : [website]. 2024. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/41451/> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

The strength of network diplomacy and its concrete embodiment – network alliances – is the possibility to discuss global issues in various dialogue formats, including those not formalized into a particular organization. One of such formats is the BRICS multilateral association, which creation was initiated in 2006 by Russia, and it was one of the most significant geopolitical events in the early 21st century. Within a short time, the BRICS five countries “rightfully *established* themselves on the global stage as an authoritative structure which influence in world affairs has been steadily *strengthening*,”¹ having transformed today into the nine-nation alliance. The development of the BRICS+ format and multi-format cooperation with other countries encourage scholars to speak of a transcontinental governance mechanism with a broad agenda covering political, security, economic and social issues,² to fear it as a “disruptive power that poses normative and structural challenges to the existing liberal international order,”³ and to see it as a creative power capable of setting common goals, balancing them and proposing the ways to achieve them despite the internal problems and contradictions among the member countries, and to recognize the deep and long-term impact of the alliance on the global economic order.⁴ The Foreign Policy Concept of Russia, updated in 2023, lays special emphasis on “strengthening the potential and enhancing the international role of the BRICS interstate association,” as well as other interstate associations and international organizations and mechanisms with Russia’s significant participation.⁵

The results of the network diplomacy are tangible: the emergence of a variety of tools and mechanisms for developing multilateral cooperation to promote security, prosperity and development in the interconnected and globalized world. Since we are talking about the network interaction, the nature of interaction between the network actors is of particular importance: the diversity of connections, the multiplicity of directions and mutual contacts that make possible the circulation of different “flows” – ideas, information, knowledge, etc. What matters here is that the whole may have greater significance than the simple sum of its parts. Put it differently, a network is capable of acquiring properties that its constituent elements do not possess individually. In systems science, this ability is called emergence. A striking example of emergence is consciousness as a special property of the nervous system that its constituent elements do not have. Emergence is the best asset of the network structures, resulting in their many advantages:

openness, allowing the creation and development of a larger network, common tools for information exchange, network management, and the ability to establish new connections.⁶ At the same time, the unpredictability of the emergent properties makes it difficult to mathematically model the life activity of network structures; the same feature, well known in biology and medicine, is characteristic of living systems: it is a mistake to believe that the more we know about the particulars, the better we will understand a complex structure.⁷ It is a difficult task to model the emergent properties of the BRICS network alliance in the long term, but it is obvious that if the intended goals of interaction “for the benefit of the citizens of the member countries” are achieved, we can expect the emergence of a new, fairer architecture of international economic relations, constructive management of world processes, and expansion of the network of partnerships based on mutual benefit, respect and consideration of each other’s interests.

The BRICS potential as a network alliance lies in its diversity and ability to combine traditions based on the shared values, and due to transcontinental dimension, cooperation among the member states has a special weight and significance.

The BRICS member states realize different development models, have different historical roots, political systems, but perhaps the heterogeneity of their linguocultural space is of particular interest. In this case, following D. S. Likhachov, “space” is understood not just as a certain geographical territory, but above all as “the space of the environment, which has not only length, but also depth.”⁸

According to the most conservative estimates, this space includes more than 300 nationalities and ethnic groups and more than 3,000 languages and dialects.

The depth of the BRICS linguocultural space is embodied by the product of the long-term work of the human intelligence, which reflects the cognitive and creative activity of many generations – language; it is a unique repository of human experience and history of the ethnos speaking it. Language is the embodiment of culture: it allows to fix and consolidate in texts, legends, customs, traditions a set of values, norms, ideals, characteristic for a social community (ethnos, nation, society), providing the meaning of human and society existence.⁹ The preservation of a nation’s language in humanitarian culture texts provides cultural continuity.¹⁰

The depth and heterogeneity of the BRICS linguocultural space is both a rich resource and a serious challenge for the implementation of the inclusive multilateralism strategy and interconnectivity¹¹ (see BRICS Economic Partnership Strategy 2025). As early as 2001, the UNESCO Uni-

¹ Выступление Президента РФ на заседании саммита БРИКС в расширенном составе 23 августа 2023 г. // Президент России : [website]. 2024. URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/72089> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

² Chakraborty S. Significance of BRICS: Regional Powers, Global Governance, and the Roadmap for Multipolar World // *Emerging Economy Studies*. 2018. Vol. 4, iss. 2. P. 182–191. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2394901518795070> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

³ Beeson M., Zeng J. The BRICS and Global Governance: China’s Contradictory Role // *Third World Quarterly*. 2018. Vol. 39, iss. 10. P. 1962–1978. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2018.1438186> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

⁴ Hopewell K. The BRICS – Merely a Fable? Emerging Power Alliances in Global Trade Governance // *International Affairs*. 2017. Vol. 93, iss. 6. P. 1377–1396. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix192> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

⁵ Концепция внешней политики Российской Федерации : утв. Президентом РФ В. В. Путиным 31 марта 2023 г. // Министерство иностранных дел РФ : [website]. 2024. URL: <https://www.mid.ru/ru/detail-material-page/1860586/?lang=ru> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

⁶ Гарбовский Н. К., Костинова О. И. Сетевое взаимодействие в переводческой деятельности // *Вестн. Моск. ун-та. Сер. 22. Теория перевода*. 2015. № 3. С. 3–21.

⁷ Садовничий В. А. Педагогические заметки о современном образовании. Избранные выступления. М. : Изд-во Моск. ун-та, 2023. С. 225.

⁸ Лихачев Д. С. Избранные труды по русской и мировой культуре / сост. и науч. ред. А. С. Запесоцкий. 2-е изд., перераб. и доп. СПб. : СПбГУП, 2015. С. 21.

⁹ Запесоцкий А. С. Образование: Философия, культурология, политика. М. : Наука, 2003. С. 151.

¹⁰ Ibid. С. 263

¹¹ Стратегия экономического партнерства БРИКС до 2025 г. // Министерство экономического развития РФ : [website]. 2024. URL: <https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/file/636aa3edbc0dce2356ebb6f8d594cb0/1148133.pdf> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

versal Declaration on Cultural Diversity recognized cultural diversity as “a source of exchange, innovation, creativity, <...> as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.” In the “Declaration of the Rights of Culture”, developed by a team of scientists of SPbUHSS under academic supervision of D. S. Likhachov, cultural cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding of the peoples of the world are defined as a necessary condition for the prevention of international and ethnic conflicts, a guarantee of justice and democracy in the context of human-creative, peacemaking and civilization-building cultural diversity on the planet.¹ But mutual understanding is impossible without mutual knowledge: the fact that conflicts are largely the result of intolerance generated by ignorance² is eloquently illustrated by the current urgent issues. The existing opportunities for exchanging information and exploring differences are not commensurate with the depth and diversity of the BRICS linguocultural space, neither in quantitative nor qualitative terms. Meanwhile, one of the conditions for the possibility of intercultural dialogue (following V. A. Lektorsky understood as a metaphor) – “conviction in its fruitfulness, that is, the attitude to the need to expand the ways of understanding the world and human, to the importance of going beyond one’s own cultural limitations and at the same time recognizing the equal participation of partners in the dialogue.”³ The existence of certain economic and political conditions enabling all participants to influence the process and outcome of the dialogue is another important condition for participation in it and a guarantee of balanced positions on the way to finding mutual understanding, compromises and consensus. How to Ensure Equitable Dialogue in the Heterogeneous Linguocultural Space of the BRICS? What constants should be at the basis of the fine-tuning of the BRICS universe by analogy with the fine-tuning of our Universe, which emerged as a result of the evolutionary principle of self-organization of molecular and galactic subsystems in the process of a certain combination of physical and chemical elements with the only possible and necessary parameters and values?

Among the fundamental constants is the presence of the three dimensions in BRICS networking. *Cultural* and humanitarian ties are one of the three main trends, along with *politics* and security, as well as *economics* and finance, in which the BRICS member countries seek to strengthen their cooperation. The cultural and humanitarian component is no less important than the other two, because “historical experience convincingly shows that without the necessary level of general culture, the exact sciences requiring great intellectual tension do not develop properly, and projects implemented without humanitarian expertise lead to man-made disasters.”⁴

However, the “specific weight” of the cultural and humanitarian dimension in the association’s governing documents is disproportionate to other agendas, in particular

the financial and economic one. The Johannesburg Declaration-II, signed at the end of the XV BRICS Summit, shows that at that time there was a lag in the implementation of the plans already outlined in this direction (see cl. 81. “We reaffirm our commitments under all the instruments and Agreements signed and adopted by <...> in the field of culture and *commit to operationalizing* the Action Plan (2022–2026) *as a matter of urgency* (emphasis added. – O. K.) through the BRICS Working Group on Culture”).⁵

Speaking at an enlarged meeting of BRICS leaders last August, V. V. Putin stated the need for “a serious conversation about the future of culture in the world, about preserving and multiplying the world’s cultural heritage.”⁶ The development of humanitarian ties in general is among Russia’s priorities for cooperation in BRICS. One of the strategic goals of the Russian Federation in BRICS is to expand the Russian linguistic, cultural and informational presence in the largest countries of the world, which are the partners of the Russian Federation in the association.⁷

Such tasks can be realized in different ways. For example, by expanding the area of study and dissemination of the Russian language in the BRICS member states, “creating a favorable institutional environment for the expansion of the Russian culture and the Russian language in foreign countries, including the activities of the Russian schools and cultural centers.”⁸ However, this path is thorny because of its asymmetry, manifested both in the disproportionality of the concepts of the Russian language / Russian culture, and in the “promotional” approach to the sphere of influence of any language, weakening the principle of “dialogue-ness”. Another way is to work on the international image of the country with a rich history, traditional and dynamically developing modern culture by stimulating interest in music, films, literature, through the creation and distribution of its own cultural products of high quality and ensuring wide access to them, supporting and preserving multilingualism and the principle of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Translation, which is based on co-creation and co-working, cognition of the “foreign” against the background of the “own” and awareness of the “own” in comparison with the “foreign”, is always an open dialogue. By solving the tasks of raising awareness, understanding and recognition of each other’s culture in the BRICS linguocultural space, translation in this case is able to fulfill another fundamental cultural creation mission – to contribute to the maintenance, preservation and improvement of the languages of small peoples, and they are the majority in the BRICS linguocultural space. “We must protect the entire sphere of culture, wrote D. S. Likhachov, – is it possible to be indifferent to the fate of the culture of small peoples living

¹ Лихачев Д. С. Оp. cit. С. 503.

² Годдард Ч. Диалоги и конфликты культур в меняющемся мире // Диалоги и конфликты культур в меняющемся мире : XXI Междунар. Лихачевские науч. чтения, 25–26 мая 2023 г. СПб. : СПбГУП, 2024. С. 55.

³ Лекторский В. А. Мультикультурализм и диалог культур // Лекции и доклады членов Российской академии наук в СПбГУП (1993–2013) : в 3 т. / сост., науч. ред. А. С. Запесоцкий. СПб. : СПбГУП, 2013. Т. 3 : Доклады и выступления. С. 389.

⁴ Запесоцкий А. С. Оp. cit. С. 249.

⁵ Йоханнесбургская декларация-II. БРИКС и Африка: партнерство в интересах совместного ускоренного роста, устойчивого развития и инклюзивной многосторонности (Сэндтон, Гаутенг, ЮАР, 23 августа 2023 г.) // Министерство иностранных дел РФ : [website]. 2024. URL: https://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/1901504/ (accessed: 04.03.2024).

⁶ Выступление Президента РФ на заседании саммита БРИКС в расширенном составе 23 августа 2023 г.

⁷ Концепция участия Российской Федерации в объединении БРИКС : утв. Президентом РФ В. В. Путиным 9 февраля 2013 г. // Министерство иностранных дел РФ : [website]. 2024. URL: https://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/1744621/ (accessed: 04.03.2024)

⁸ Стратегия государственной культурной политики на период до 2030 года : утв. распоряжением Правительства РФ от 29 февраля 2016 г. // Правительство РФ : [website]. 2024. URL: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/AsA9RAyYVAJnoBuKgH0qEJA91xP7f2xm.pdf> (accessed: 04.03.2024).

in the environment of numerous peoples possessing state power?”¹

Our country has a rich experience accumulated during the period of intense activity of the publishing houses “Progress”, “Mir”, “Raduga” in the Soviet era. Today, in India, books by Soviet authors published by these publishing houses in English, Hindi, Marathi, Malayam, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and other Indian languages have become a desired collector’s item and a subject of discussion in online communities. Children’s literature, classics, textbooks of the Soviet era are still very much in demand: for some people it is a nostalgia for their childhood years, others appreciate the quality of scientific literature and still use it in preparation for exams for engineering faculties, others see these books as real art objects, as well as thanks to talented artists-illustrators.²

The soft power of translation made decades ago still works effectively for the benefit of the dialogue among cultures. This fine-tuning constant is very significant, which is very well realized, for example, by our BRICS partner, the PRC. President Xi Jinping’s ideas about the importance of translation activities in strengthening China’s coopera-

tion with other countries, building a community of common destiny of mankind, are now embodied in special government grant programs aimed at introducing Chinese culture and literature, traditions and worldview, philosophy and history through translations into different languages of the world, sometimes performed by Chinese translators in tandem with native speakers of the target languages. These observations lead us to the following two issues of fine-tuning of interaction within BRICS that need to be considered in the future, namely training and formation of translation personnel capable of ensuring that the rich cultural heritage of the Russian Federation is represented in the BRICS languages, as well as targeting cultural interaction, including through translation, at the youth of the BRICS countries, who represent a huge potential for growth.

In conclusion, let’s quote the lines from the Decree signed by Empress Elizabeth Petrovna on the establishment of the Moscow University, which became the university law: “Any good comes from an enlightened mind, and evil is eradicated thereby.” We believe that this commandment succinctly reflects the vector of the cultural and humanitarian measurement of cooperation between the BRICS countries.

¹ Лихачев Д. С. О.р. cit. С. 509.

² See: Sreedharan D. How Soviet Children’s Books Became Collectors’ Items in India Thanks to nostalgia, the literary legacy of the USSR has a long afterlife // Atlas Obscura. 2021. 14 Apr. URL: <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/soviet-childrens-books-in-india> (accessed: 04.03.2024).